



Metropolitan **Planning Council**  
**Plan for Prosperity:**  
**2011 Policy Objectives**



## Metropolitan Planning Council

Each year, MPC presents its 12-month agenda for developing, advocating for, and implementing policies that advance our mission:

Since 1934, the Metropolitan Planning Council (MPC) has been dedicated to shaping a more sustainable and prosperous greater Chicago region. As an independent, nonprofit, nonpartisan organization, MPC serves communities and residents by developing, promoting and implementing solutions for sound regional growth.

MPC builds consensus around its agenda by partnering with civic organizations, community groups, business leaders, and government agencies throughout the research, advocacy and implementation stages of policy development. For 77 years, this cooperative approach has proven fundamental to making lasting change in our growing region.

# Dear Partners:

What does “livable” mean to you? It may be a small word, but it is a broad concept at the core of our work at the Metropolitan Planning Council.

Does livable mean you can afford the things you and your family need, including your rent or mortgage, daily travel, utilities, and food?

Does it mean the resources and opportunities you enjoy in your community – quality schools, decent jobs, convenient shops, reliable public transportation, safe places where you and your neighbors can play and be active, clean water and air – are available in cities and towns across the region and nation?

Is a livable place one where the economy, job opportunities, and population are growing?

Is it about looking into the future with confidence, knowing the life you’ve built in the community where you’ve chosen to live is going to get better, not worse?

Might livable also mean making smarter choices, both as individuals and as a community? Can we get more out of investments we’ve already made – in our homes, schools, healthcare system, roads, you name it – by being more resourceful, efficient and innovative?

For MPC, it means all of these things. We work with communities across Northeastern Illinois and Northwest Indiana, as well as decision-makers at the municipal, regional, state and federal levels, to ensure our region is truly sustainable, equitable, competitive – yes, *livable* – for people and businesses.

Two years ago the federal government mapped out Livability Principles, six goals driving policies and investments that support economically resilient, environmentally conscious, socially equitable communities. During that time, metropolitan Chicago has attracted new federal resources. This region is proving, with plans such as Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning’s *GO TO 2040*, and consensus-driven, regional economic development initiatives such as the Chicago Southland Housing and Community Development Collaborative and Gary and Region Investment Project, that we will be good stewards of taxpayer dollars through goal-driven, right-sized and collaborative investments.

MPC is looking forward to continuing to work with local, regional, state, and federal partners throughout 2011, to pursue policies and investments that make livable a word that rings true for each of us.

Sincerely,



MarySue Barrett  
President



# Livability.

During a time of wrenching economic change, the ability of our region and the nation to compete globally will depend on smarter public and private investment strategies. Reformed investment strategies are critical to putting communities on the path to a more **economically competitive, socially equitable,** and **environmentally sustainable** future. A promising example: The Obama administration has articulated six Livability Principles that are guiding and coordinating planning and investment decisions made by federal agencies. MPC wholeheartedly supports these principles as well as a seventh, Conserve Natural Resources.

Given the expertise of our largely private-sector Board of Governors, MPC is eager to support efforts that ensure these lofty public sector objectives engage employers and other private sector champions. Our 2011 Plan for Prosperity incorporates not only specific policy proposals, but also intensive technical assistance to support on-the-ground efforts in our region that are modeling these principles, and advocacy to institutionalize coordinated, right-sized, and goal-driven decision-making and investments at the regional, state and federal levels.



# Livability Principles

**1. Provide more transportation choices.** Develop safe, reliable and economical transportation choices to decrease household transportation costs, reduce our nation's dependence on foreign oil, improve air quality, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and promote public health.

**2. Promote equitable, affordable housing.** Expand location and energy-efficient housing choices for people of all ages, incomes, races, and ethnicities to increase mobility and lower the combined cost of housing and transportation.

**3. Enhance economic competitiveness.** Improve economic competitiveness through reliable and timely access to employment.

**4. Support existing communities.** Target federal funding toward existing communities — through strategies such as transit-oriented, mixed-use development, and land recycling — to increase community revitalization and the efficiency of public works investments, and safeguard rural landscapes.

**5. Coordinate and leverage federal policies and investment.** Align federal policies and funding to remove barriers to collaboration, leverage funding, and increase the accountability and effectiveness of all levels of government to plan for future growth, including making smart energy choices such as locally generated renewable energy.

**6. Value communities and neighborhoods.** Enhance the unique characteristics of all communities by investing in healthy, safe, and walkable neighborhoods— rural, urban, or suburban.

*MPC and its partners feel strongly that the federal government's current list of Livability Principles should be expanded to include the conservation of natural resources.*

**7. Conserve natural resources.** Protect air, water, open space, and other natural resources by investing in existing communities, demand management, conservation, and efficiency strategies.

# Sustainable.

This doesn't just mean taking care of the environment. Sustainability is the capacity for individuals, ecosystems, markets and communities to endure, diversify and remain productive over time. It starts with preserving the assets that made something viable in the first place, but also requires adapting and responding to new demands, challenges and opportunities.

## How is MPC creating a sustainable region?

MPC identifies and supports existing resources and assets that have made our region what it is today, including Lake Michigan and six of the nation's seven Class A railroads, the nation's second-largest transit network, a robust highway system, diversified economy, quality homes, vibrant public places and destinations, and, of course, the people who live and work here.

We track and respond to the challenges threatening to degrade these assets, as well as the opportunities to enhance them. At the policy level, this means reforming incentives and initiatives that allow our region to expand upon our greatest assets, so that we can continue to thrive in the face of growing need, limited resources, and new market realities.

### Working together pays off

*The South Suburbs' interjurisdictional approach to creating attractive, sustainable communities, with quality homes, near transit stops and job centers, has attracted significant fiscal and political support:*

## \$9 million

from the Neighborhood Stabilization Program for foreclosure recovery.

## \$2.35 million

Sustainable Communities Challenge Grant for planning and land acquisition.

## \$100,000

in the past year from the Regional Transportation Authority to study transit-oriented development opportunities.

## \$150,000

approximate value of U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's Smart Growth Implementation Assistance, to support land assembly and land banking strategies.

## \$72,000

for energy code training.

## \$286,500

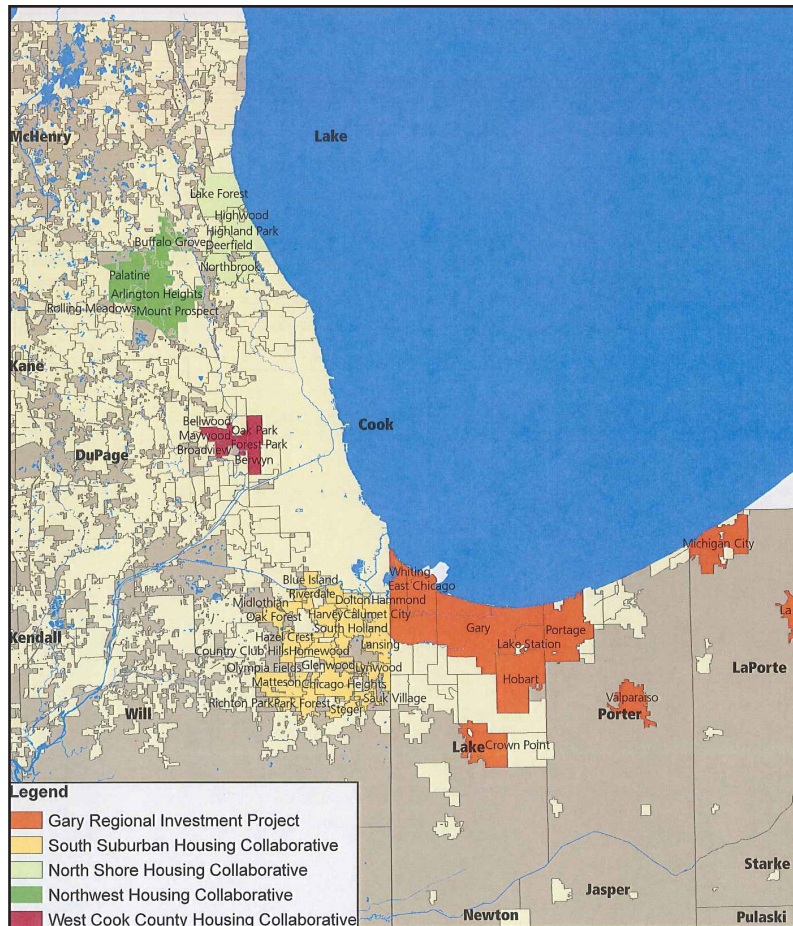
from The Chicago Community Trust, Grand Victoria Foundation, and Field Foundation of Illinois.

**Recommendation: Reward governments that collaborate to solve shared housing and community development challenges.**

Most local development issues – housing, transportation, water quality – do not adhere to municipal boundaries. By partnering with neighboring towns, communities can tackle these challenges more effectively, multiply their local capacity, and get more bang for their collective buck – all welcome results at a time when municipalities are forced to squeeze every cent from their lean budgets. For the private sector – employers, developers and banks, for example – the single contact point for multiple towns also creates real bottom-line efficiencies.

In 2011, recognizing that this interjurisdictional approach represents dramatic change for our region's 280-plus mayors, MPC will continue to promote regional, state and federal incentives needed to reward champions of municipal collaboration. We also will provide technical assistance to five geographic areas, some of whom already have benefitted from these new incentives: South Cook County, West Cook County, Northwest Suburbs, North Shore Suburbs, and Northwest Indiana (see map). Lessons learned from these efforts will determine optimal roles for CMAP, the Regional Transportation Authority, Metropolitan Mayors Caucus, State of Illinois, and Regional Development Authority; and will identify new tools, funding and incentives to support and reward interjurisdictional collaboration. Transit-oriented redevelopment, rental preservation, shared equity, employer-assisted housing, and foreclosure prevention and response strategies are just a sampling of the complex efforts that municipal collaborations already are tackling.

**MPC's Interjurisdictional Collaboration Areas 2011**



*MPC is working with 52 communities in Northeastern Illinois and Northwest Indiana to solve local development challenges through interjurisdictional solutions.*

## Recommendation: Enact smarter spending to support our transportation network.

President Barack Obama has outlined his proposal for a \$50 billion investment in transportation infrastructure to create jobs and support more livable communities. Congress will be asked to consider this proposal in 2011, as well as a larger package to repair, modernize and expand transit, roads, bridges, and freight rail. MPC is shaping these critical investments in collaboration with Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP), Transportation for America, Brookings Institution, and transportation governance agencies. MPC recommends smarter spending of tax dollars driven by mode-neutral goals for federal, state and regional transportation systems.

To manage growing demand and reduce the need for costly new investments, we are exploring ways to maximize the capacity of the existing network. For instance, MPC is partnering with CMAP and the Illinois Tollway to identify next steps for congestion pricing in northeastern Illinois, and with the Chicago Transit Authority (CTA) to explore the potential for bus rapid transit to improve transportation connections and economic

development in Chicago.

MPC also is advocating for legislation that would allow Illinois to tap innovative, public-private financing for transportation projects, including the Elgin-O'Hare Expressway, western access, rail freight modernization, express trains to the airport, and other transit enhancements. In the face of shrinking public resources, public-private partnerships can provide new and reliable revenue sources.

### For drivers, time is money.

*The 2010 study "The Road Less Traveled: Exploring Congestion Pricing in Chicago" included results of a survey of 1,976 people in Northeastern Illinois. In general, people supported increased tolls if it would reduce congestion and save them time.*

- 85%** I will pay an extra toll if it assures me my travel won't be slowed by traffic conditions.
- 40%** I'm able to access a sufficient number of transit routes from my neighborhood.
- 82%** I support using tolls to pay for highway improvements that relieve congestion.
- 97%** I'll use a toll route if the tolls are reasonable and I save time.

## Recommendation: Enact common sense policy reforms to reduce water leakage and waste, improve quality, and promote conservation.

Northeastern Illinois and Northwest Indiana are lucky to have access to Lake Michigan; the Great Lakes comprise one-fifth of the Earth's freshwater. The Kankakee and Fox rivers, deep aquifers created by glaciers, and shallow aquifers fed by rain also supply water to drink and to power our industry. As our population grows, the stresses on these water supplies – and the aging infrastructure needed to treat and deliver clean water and pump away waste water – have grown exponentially.

The State Revolving Loan Funds – through which the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency delivers dollars to states and communities to upgrade water-related infrastructure – must put greater priority on investments that fix existing pipes, minimize leaks, and expand green infrastructure.

To meet the conservation and efficiency requirements of the Great Lakes Compact,

the State of Illinois also must redefine water loss. The current accounting system for Lake Michigan water includes a loophole that discourages sustainable water use – the older the pipes, the more allowable loss. Instead, all communities should be held to the same standard, and state funding programs should prioritize projects that reduce water waste.

**124**  
Million gallons  
a day

Approximate total daily water demand for Kane, Kendall and McHenry counties in 2005.

**130**  
Million gallons  
a day

The approximate total amount of Lake Michigan water lost daily (leaked or otherwise unaccounted for) from public pipes throughout northeastern Illinois in 2005.



## Recommendation: Update the state plumbing code to enable water reuse.

At the Ryerson Woods Welcome Center, rainwater from the center's roof is funneled by downspouts and pipes into a 60,000 gallon underground cistern. The water in the cistern then can be used to sprinkle the building in case of a fire, irrigate newly planted shrubs, flowers and rain gardens, and flush the building's low-flow toilets.

The rainwater harvesting system at Ryerson Woods is one of only a few in Illinois. MPC and Openlands are working to change that by advancing simple solutions, such as updating the state plumbing code to enable water reuse, and allowing developments to capture rainfall or recycle gray water for nonpotable uses. Reusing the only free water we have – rain – is a smart way to mitigate water lost in our region.



Photo by Emily Cikanek

*Nan Buckardt, director of environmental education and public affairs, Lake County Forest Preserves District, next to the Ryerson Woods Welcome Center's rainwater harvesting system.*

## What is our water worth?



What Our Water's Worth (WOWW) is a multifaceted communications campaign led by MPC and Openlands to raise awareness about the value of water in Northeastern

Illinois and Northwestern Indiana. WOWW is exploring water's value through a monthly e-newsletter and [chicagolandh2o.org](http://chicagolandh2o.org), which presents:

- interviews with people from the region who value water;
- data and an interactive map explaining where our water comes from; and
- tips and resources for responsible water use.

The entire campaign explores a central idea: From Lake Michigan to the Fox River, how we use our water resources – including what we conserve, how much we waste, and what we choose to invest in water quality – is up to each of us. This is our water – and it's worth more than we know.



Photo by Emily Cikanek

*Communities with a diverse set of water sources, such as the City of Aurora, Ill., must provide water as efficiently as possible, while protecting each water source for future use. It's a balancing act, according to Mayor Tom Weisner. "Our water has been named Illinois' best tasting water three times in the last five years, and we're achieving that level of satisfaction while trying to control costs, increase efficiency, and protect the environment. That's no small task."*

# Equitable.

While most people agree “everyone deserves a fair shake,” that’s not the same thing as dividing the pie equally. Equitable is about ensuring every person has equal access to basic resources and opportunities. However, in a nation that values individuality, “equal” loses its allure if that also means being the same.

## How is MPC supporting more equitable, distinct and vibrant communities?

MPC understands our communities will never – and should never – be cookie-cutter. Part of what makes Chicagoland attractive is that its places are as diverse as its people. Yet livable communities need certain basic elements – and not all municipalities in our region possess them today.

We support policies that ensure everyone in our region, from Gary, Ind., to Geneva, Ill., and beyond, can rent or buy a decent place to live, find a good job with a reasonable commute, enroll their children in a quality school, and have access to healthy foods, safe parks, reliable public transportation, and clean water. MPC advances specific policies – at the municipal, regional, state and federal levels – that increase opportunities where they are needed most.

### **Recommendation: Increase the availability of quality homes in livable communities.**

For the 60,000 families in the region with Housing Choice Vouchers – let alone the 60,000 households on voucher waiting lists, and the 400,000-plus households that are income-eligible for vouchers – it can be a struggle to find decent, affordable homes near jobs and transit. Barriers range from common misconceptions and, yes, fears about affordable housing, to federal regulations that constrain public housing authorities as they work with local communities to meet the demand for affordable homes.

In partnership with the U.S. Dept. of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and regional housing authorities, in 2011 MPC envisions a multi-faceted pilot to

increase the availability of quality homes near good jobs, transit, schools, and amenities, for those eligible for Housing Choice Vouchers and other HUD rental assistance programs. This pilot will build upon MPC’s successful Regional Housing Initiative, which provides operating subsidies to developers and owners of quality rental housing and continues our work to make it easier and more cost-effective for housing authorities to help tenants move to attractive communities. MPC will help align the goals of local mayors, public housing authorities, the families they serve, as well as CMAP, to ensure public housing resources deliver on the promise of more equitable neighborhoods.

## Recommendation: Strategically invest in communities with existing public housing.

Since 1999, the Chicago Housing Authority (CHA) has invested heavily in reinventing public housing by building new mixed-income communities where CHA high rises once stood. To ensure these new homes are part of successful neighborhoods, MPC has been working intensively in three areas – the Mid-South, Near North, and Near West – to improve access to public transportation and retail and to make the communities more pedestrian and bike-friendly, through Reconnecting Neighborhoods.

In 2009, validating the vision and input from public meetings and targeted outreach to local residents and business owners in each community, the City of Chicago adopted detailed recommendations to make these communities more livable. MPC is seizing opportunities to advance these recommendations:

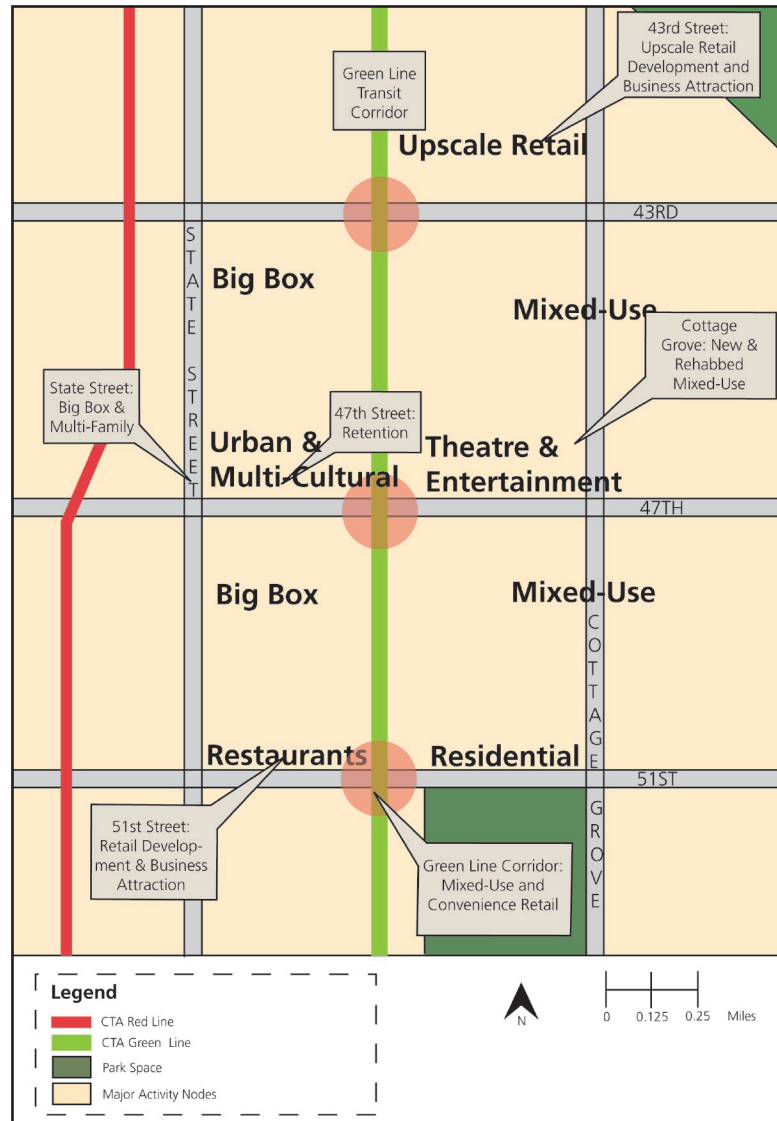
- MPC will support the City of Chicago as it conducts an alternative analysis of transit investments for the entire south lakefront. Building off successful practices used in the Reconnecting Neighborhoods process, MPC will support effective community engagement and ensure the Mid-South recommendations are rigorously evaluated.

- MPC will partner with community groups in Bronzeville, and engage the broader community in developing a focused retail strategy for three corridors that intersect Green Line stations at 43rd, 47th, and 51st streets (see map).

- MPC will continue to advance innovative design recommendations for the proposed CTA Green Line station at Damen Avenue and Lake Street, near the United Center.

MPC endorses the CHA's goals to ensure the redevelopment of the Julia C. Lathrop Homes, near the intersection of Damen, Clybourn and Diversey, demonstrates the potential of large-scale green redevelopment as the nation's first affordable Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design for Neighborhood Development (LEED-ND) project. While Lathrop's cutting edge approach can inform

### Reconnecting the Mid-South Side of Chicago through improved transit and retail



other local and national efforts, it benefits and expands on lessons learned through MPC's past "Building Successful Mixed-Income Communities" forums co-facilitated with CHA and the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation.

*Through the Reconnecting Neighborhoods community planning process in 2008, MPC helped shape the Mid-South Side's vision for more robust transit connections and retail opportunities in the community.*

# Competitive.

Just as an entrepreneur needs a business plan to succeed in this global economy, a metropolitan region needs a clear vision and plan for getting where it wants to go. Northeastern Illinois and Northwest Indiana are competing for new money, markets and jobs with metropolitan regions from Kansas City, Mo., to Mumbai, India. By sticking to sector-specific, data-based plans for economic growth, we can attract new employers, homeowners, and public and private investors – all of whom demand predictability, even in the most stable economic times.

## How is MPC supporting competitive communities?

Planning is our middle name, so it's no surprise MPC is a staunch advocate for strong regional planning. CMAP recently adopted *GO TO 2040*, the first comprehensive plan for Northeastern Illinois since the 1909 Plan of Chicago; and the Northwestern Indiana Regional Planning Commission is expected to adopt its 2040 growth plan in 2011, based on a preferred scenario that favors development in the urban core communities. Both agencies can provide assistance models and incentives for local communities to contribute to and benefit from these critical roadmaps for economic growth and recovery. Nearly all of MPC's projects strengthen and support these and sister agencies as they implement what are, effectively, our region's business plans.

While Illinois' and Indiana's unemployment rates are improving somewhat, they remain troubling. To retain existing and attract new businesses, MPC brings employers to the same table as planners, policy advocates, community leaders, residents, and lawmakers. By engaging the business community in the development of local and regional plans and policies, our region has a better chance of attracting new growth and new jobs.

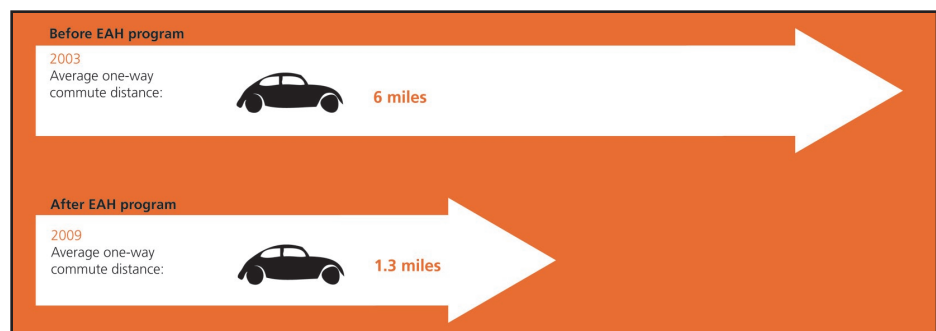
## Recommendation: Engage the business community in creating livable communities.

For more than a decade, MPC's Employer-Assisted Housing (EAH) initiative has engaged employers in helping their workers afford the top two household expenses, housing and transportation. Through EAH, Illinois employers have helped more than 3,550 employees purchase or rent homes near work or transit. Many of these employers have become champions for workforce housing and transit policies. In coordination with the Chicago Climate Action Plan and CMAP, MPC is recruiting 10 to 15 employers to adopt EAH, energy-efficiency, and other commute options such as Transit Check and bike-to-work incentives. We will measure how these

programs reduce employees' commutes and housing and transportation costs, as well as employers' carbon footprints and recruitment and retention expenses. We

will then use this powerful data to support new state and federal incentives to expand public-private initiatives.

### EAH shortens University of Chicago employees' commutes



## Recommendation: Align investments with existing and developing regional plans.

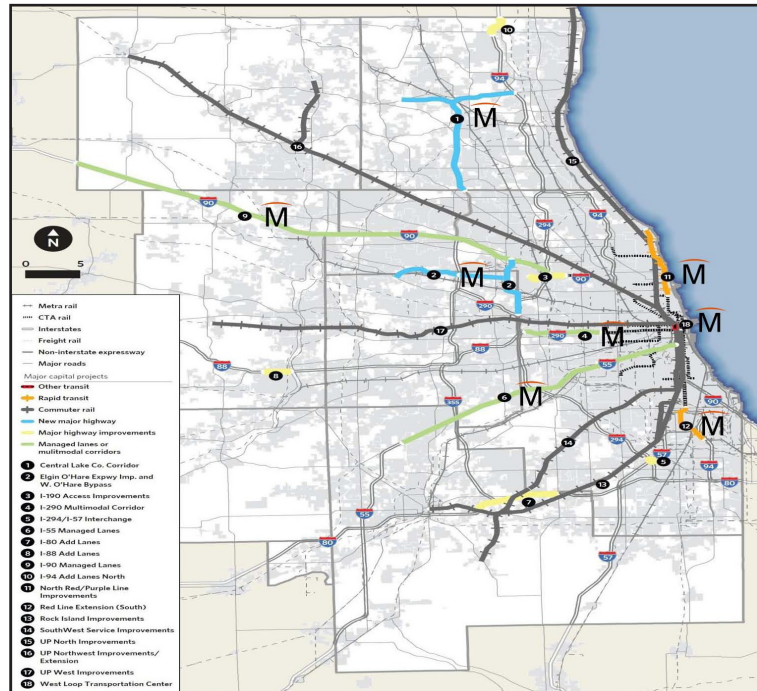
As the economy picks up, and with it ripe opportunities for development, local plans must be consistent with CMAP's *GO TO 2040* plan for Northeastern Illinois and NIRPC's 2040 plan for Northwest Indiana.

A new Sustainable Communities Partnership Working Group in Region V – which represents federal agencies serving Illinois and surrounding states – under CMAP's leadership and with support from MPC, is convening public and private sector funders and technical assistance providers to ensure local development efforts leverage coordinated federal support.

In Indiana, MPC is leading the Gary and Region Investment Project (GRIP), an initiative to create regional consensus around two to three transformative projects to revitalize Gary and Northwest Indiana's urban core communities and identify resources to make them happen. The priority projects will help implement NIRPC's preferred scenario by connecting underserved populations to new housing and jobs, linking existing transportation and environmental assets, and sparking economic development.

In Illinois, where MPC co-chaired the State Linkage Group in 2010, we will champion common sense recommendations that

## MPC and CMAP: Aligned agendas for improved infrastructure



M = MPC

emerged from that convening. Illinois needs its own set of Livability Principles so the governor can define clear roles for each department to align housing, transportation, jobs, land-use, and investments. These plans must guide and support regional capacity and decision-making.

*MPC and CMAP are committed to creating healthy, safe and walkable communities that offer choices for timely transportation to schools, jobs, services, and basic needs. This map shows where our projects overlap, fostering a partnership that advances both GO TO 2040 and MPC's mission.*

## Recommendation: Chart a new course for the Chicago River.

Fears of invasive species have fueled discussion of separating the Great Lakes and Mississippi River basins, which would have significant, but unknown, effects on flooding and water quality, freight and recreational movement. When our forbears decided to reverse the flow of the Chicago River a century ago, their decision was based on big-picture, long-range planning – a lesson we must take to heart: MPC strongly advocates for a regional decision-making process about the future of the Chicago River that ensures all five of the following principles are met:

1. Improve the water quality and ecosystems of Lake Michigan, Chicago area rivers, and the Mississippi Basin, through better treatment and reduced stormwater and combined sewer overflow effects.
2. Provide clean drinking water for the growing region, easing reliance on strained aquifers and rivers.
3. Enhance the capacity and efficiency of Chicago's intermodal freight facilities.

4. Sustain growth in recreational and tourism uses of the Chicago Area Waterway System.

5. Eliminate risk of interbasin species transfer.

Separation may be the best option, but only if we can protect Lake Michigan and build the region's economy.



Photo by Mitch Suprenant

# Conclusion.

Achieving more livable communities will require a commitment to innovation, policy reform, smarter investment decisions, and, most of all, leadership by individuals, businesses and government.

We all have a part to play, and while MPC has defined its role on the previous pages, we never work alone. Our partnerships span the public and private sector, from Chicago to Springfield to D.C., and beyond. In 2011, we are intensifying our commitment to work with elected officials, both green and seasoned, who are confronting historic budget deficits and cloudy fiscal forecasts at all levels of government.

We believe that in the face of economic austerity, we can make progress toward more sustainable, equitable and competitive communities. Indeed, our economic situation demands it. Business as usual simply does not work. However, through inspiring investments and inspired leadership, we can build a livable region that will thrive in the face of future economic storms.



## **Our Mission**

Since 1934, the Metropolitan Planning Council (MPC) has been dedicated to shaping a more sustainable and prosperous greater Chicago region. As an independent, nonprofit, nonpartisan organization, MPC serves communities and residents by developing, promoting and implementing solutions for sound regional growth.



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