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How Green Is My Valley (or City or Town)? Examination of Sustainable and Green Land Use Practices and Regulation.

CMAP's Role in Regional & Local Sustainability Planning

Kristin Ihnchak

Associate Planner

Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning

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CMAP's Role in Regional & Local Sustainability Planning

The Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP) is actively implementing the GO TO 2040 Comprehensive Regional Plan, the 7-county region's first comprehensive plan since the 1909 Burnham Plan of Chicago. GO TO 2040 advocates for the long-term sustainability and prosperity of the Chicagoland region through the Plan's 4 major themes: Livable Communities, Human Capital, Efficient Governance, and Regional Mobility.

The Livable Communities theme emphasizes the importance of "livability": the sense of place and other factors that draw residents to certain communities. Such factors might include housing affordability, open space access, transportation amenities, or convenience in terms of employment opportunities. The Human Capital theme discusses how the regional labor force is directly related to economic prosperity, which makes it critical to improve the region's workforce and educational opportunities. In an effort to make local governments more accessible to the public, the Efficient Governance theme calls for governments to become more transparent and responsive to the needs of citizens. Finally, the Regional Mobility theme focuses on our regional transportation system as a key asset that must be maintained and strategically invested in.

One of GO TO 2040's primary implementation items is to provide technical assistance to communities around the region to help them create planning documents that are aligned with the major themes and recommendations of the Plan. To follow through with this idea, CMAP applied for a 3-year, $4.25 million grant from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) as part of the federal interagency Partnership for Sustainable Communities. The grant, which was awarded in early 2011, enabled the creation of CMAP's Local Technical Assistance (LTA) program.

As one of the first LTA program awardees, the Village of Park Forest, in conjunction with CMAP staff, is creating a Sustainability Plan. The Village has long been actively pursuing sustainability-related initiatives and is looking to pull those initiatives together and create an innovative plan for moving forward. In addition, since sustainability planning is a relatively new concept for many municipalities, CMAP is hoping that the Park Forest Plan will provide a template and model for other Chicagoland entities to pursue their own sustainability planning processes.

The Park Forest Sustainability Plan will address topics such as development patterns and zoning, transportation, natural systems, energy, economic development, local food, and equity issues. It will be heavily based on baseline and target indicators and quantitative data to give the Village clear standards by which it can monitor its progress in the future. The Plan will be implementation-oriented and give the Village a roadmap for decision-making to achieve a sustainable future.