



Planning for Progress

Cook County is the largest county in the state, encompassing the City of Chicago and 130 incorporated municipalities. The County is about to embark on an important strategic planning process: **Planning for Progress**. This process will lead to the development of a new Consolidated Plan (Con Plan) and Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS). The County is partnering with CMAP's Local Technical Assistance (LTA) program to capitalize on these planning efforts, achieving countywide and subregional goals that will provide a higher quality of life for its residents, workers, and visitors.

What is a Consolidated Plan?

Each year, Cook County receives Community Development Block Grant (CDBG), Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG), and HOME Investment Partnerships Program (HOME) funds from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). These funds are utilized to support a variety of community development, affordable housing, and economic development programs and projects throughout suburban Cook County primarily for the benefit of low- and moderate-income households. Past initiatives have included housing rehabilitation, downpayment assistance, social services, infrastructure, and workforce development. As a recipient of these funds, the County is required to prepare and submit a Con Plan to HUD every five years. A new Con Plan must be developed and submitted to HUD by August 2015 to cover 2015-19. The Con Plan process will assess local assets, resources, needs, market conditions, and opportunities.

What is a Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy?

A CEDS aims to unify the public and private sectors via the development of a targeted strategy to expand and strengthen local and regional economies. Such plans often identify important industrial clusters and then consider ways in which to boost the competitiveness of these industries, such as workforce development needs and priority infrastructure projects. The County must submit a new CEDS to the Economic Development Administration (EDA) by February 2015 to cover 2015-19. The new CEDS, which is required to apply for assistance under the EDA's Public Works or Economic Adjustment programs, will create detailed strategies that build off and expand the findings outlined in the County's 2013 report, *Partnering for Prosperity: An Economic Growth Action Agenda for Cook County*.

A Vision for a New Plan

Given the similarity in analysis, outreach, and timeframes, the development of a new CEDS and Con Plan offers the County an opportunity to create a combined plan: **Planning for Progress**. This document will provide a higher quality of life for residents by strategically planning for future housing, community, and economic development needs throughout the County. Creating a single plan for related funding sources will maintain cohesiveness and help the County be more efficient and coordinated in using a wide spectrum of Federal funds to address local issues. GO TO 2040's recommendation to pursue coordinated investments emphasizes the value of this strategic approach. Over the next two years, the County, with technical assistance from CMAP, will be preparing **Planning for Progress**. Outreach is a key component of a successful planning initiative and this process will include numerous opportunities for participation.