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Seven Generations Ahead Lands Major Grant

In front of hundreds of municipal movers and shakers, Oak Park nonprofit takes a bow.

By Casey Cora | [Email the author](#) | May 25, 2012

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Seven Generations Ahead, Oak Park's ubiquitous environmental nonprofit, has earned some special recognition and a bundle of grant money.

The announcement was unveiled at Thursday's [Ideas Exchange](#), the [Chicago Metropolitan Planning Agency's](#) (CMAP) one-day conference where hundreds of officials from municipal planning groups gathered to for panel discussions and breakout sessions for like parking, water conservation, sustainability planning and "right-sizing" retail development.

[Seven Generations Ahead](#) has a hand in all those areas, many of which are addressed in the group's sweeping PlanItGreen initiative, the joint effort between Oak Park and River Forest civic institutions geared toward long-term sustainability that launched last year.

It's the group's long-term visions that earned it a \$55,000 grant. Gary Cuneen, SGA's executive director, said the money will be used to implement parts certain parts of the plan, including energy efficiency, institutional composting and water conservation.

"It's great," Cuneen said after receiving the award. "We're one of five communities in the Chicago area to get this very competitive grant. Oak Park has been such a leader in sustainability, and now through PlanIt Green, I think this represents a model of how two communities can cross borders to work together to not only develop a plan but implement it."

The grant award was issued by the [Chicago Community Trust](#) as part of that group's Community-Based Sustainable Development plan, which dovetails with CMAP's "Go to 2040" initiative, a [comprehensive regional plan to help the seven counties and 284 communities plan together for sustainable prosperity through mid-century and beyond.](#)

Other groups receiving grant money on Thursday include the [village of Park Forest](#) for its Growing Green Initiative centering on sustainability, the [Active Transportation Alliance](#) for its work with Blue Island, Des Plaines, Forest Park, Hoffman Estates, and Riverdale to create [safe, smart transportation plans](#), The Developing Communities Project for its bid to extend the CTA Red Line to 130th Street and The [The Renaissance Collaborative](#) for its work to revitalize parts of the Bronzeville neighborhood.

"We want to generate results and really move the needle," Cuneen said. "We're thrilled of course to be selected."

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