

Open Government at Its Best: Metro Chicago's MetroPulse

Built by Information Builders, MetroPulse Website Provides Citizens With Data on Quality of Life Issues

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According to many government watchers and industry analysts, open government and the transparency of information available to citizens will be a key trend for the future. In fact, in IDC's *U.S. Government 2011 Top 10 Predictions report*, the firm predicted:

Open government initiatives will begin to visibly impact collaboration among agencies, programs, and processes, leading to visible and measurable improvements in the quality of citizen experiences and interaction with government.

Metropolitan Chicago exemplifies the trend perfectly.

With the help of [Information Builders](#), an independent leader in [business intelligence \(BI\)](#) solutions, the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP) and The Chicago Community Trust developed [MetroPulse](#), a comprehensive site enabling government units, non-profit agencies, and local businesses to research and share information about a variety of factors impacting residents' quality of life.

Any web user can access the [MetroPulse](#) site to access information on topics such as crime, health, education, economic development, land use, transportation, housing, safety and workforce. Drop-down menus let them qualify the data by key performance indicators (KPIs), data set, and geography.

Background

- [MetroPulse](#) is a key part of CMAP's [GO TO 2040](#) planning campaign. It is quickly gaining popularity – with local and regional government officials, planners, developers, schools, health boards, economists, and many other factions, both public and private.
- During previous decades of rapid, but largely uncoordinated expansion, the Chicago region grew in unsustainable ways, with new homes cropping up in outlying areas and jobs that were often far from the region's residential centers.
- CMAP developed its comprehensive GO TO 2040 plan to help reverse these detrimental trends and to gradually improve the prosperity and livability of the Metropolitan Chicago region.
- [MetroPulse](#) features 250 KPIs which track everything from high school graduation rates to housing foreclosure statistics.
- Many of the KPIs have goals associated with them that impact public policy decisions. For example, transit riders make about two million public transit trips each weekday, a figure that GO TO 2040 seeks to increase. The plan also calls for reductions of the 139.8 million metric tons of greenhouse gasses that the region emits yearly and for redevelopment of existing urban areas rather than expansion into new undeveloped ones.
- Information Builders' strong [support for Adobe FLEX](#) is what initially led CMAP to purchase the [WebFOCUS BI](#) platform, along with WebFOCUS' ability to create, consume, and publish web services as an interface to CMAP's comprehensive regional planning database.

Executive Quotes

- Andrew Williams-Clark, CMAP senior planner and regional indicators project manager: "While CMAP determines which goals and data points are of interest, MetroPulse tells us how we are doing on those goals. WebFOCUS provides metrics to gauge how we are doing as a region and then presents that information in useful ways. Complex information is much more powerful when you can visualize it."
- Andrew Williams-Clark, CMAP senior planner and regional indicators project manager: "Any government operation has a certain obligation to handle public data as business intelligence. Public policy decisions require a lot of data analysis. WebFOCUS allows us to visualize a tremendous amount of data to monitor dozens of important trends so civic leaders can make decisions that positively impact the metropolitan Chicago region."
- Greg Sanders, an information architect at CMAP: "WebFOCUS has a lot of flexibility for consuming the results of web services calls, and that's essential to the MetroPulse architecture. In addition, Information Builders has fully integrated WebFOCUS with the Adobe FLEX platform. When they demonstrated these out-of-the-box capabilities, it was clear that Information Builders was a step ahead of all the other BI vendors."

About CMAP

The Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP) is the comprehensive regional planning organization for the northeastern Illinois counties of Cook, DuPage, Kane, Kendall, Lake, McHenry, and Will. By state and federal law, CMAP is responsible for producing the region's official, integrated plan for land use and transportation. The agency's innovative *GO TO 2040* planning campaign develops and implements strategies to shape the region's transportation system and development patterns, while also addressing the natural environment, economic development, housing, education, human services, and other factors shaping quality of life. See [cmap.illinois.gov](#) for more information.