

GOVERNMENT

Morton Grove Sees Future with CMAP

The Village of Morton Grove submits its application for regional consultants' planning expertise.

By **Carrie Porter** | [Email the author](#) | 5:55am

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With job cuts, tight budgets and rising taxes, it is no secret that Morton Grove has a few economic snags to sort out.

But there may be help on the way with potential assistance from the [Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning \(CMAP\)](#), a regional planning organization that covers seven counties.

Today is the final day for local municipalities, counties, interjurisdictional groups and nongovernmental organizations to submit applications to win staff resources and technical assistance for local planning projects.

And Morton Grove put in its bid a week early, according to Community and Economic Director John Said.

"I put a lot of prep into the application, and I talked to one of the CMAP folks and she kind of helped me with feedback," Said said. "It is nice to avoid deadline problems, and I know that they have received it, so that's a good thing."

The [Local Technical Assistance Program](#) is part of a larger CMAP plan known as [GO TO 2040](#), a comprehensive plan to guide sustainable communities, efficient governments, effective transportation and human capital.

Moving forward with long-term planning

"The local assistance program, in which we hire professional planners to work on zoning and regulations, is one of the major things we're doing to implement GO TO 2040," said Bob Dean, the deputy executive director for planning and project manager of the program.

"For local communities there are not a lot of resources available to do planning work, and it's hard to set aside funding for longer term planning, especially in these economic times."

According to Said, the Village of Morton Grove put in its bid for help with the development of industrial property near Oakton Avenue and around the corner of Waukegan Road and Golf Avenue.

"In thinking about our community, we have had so much planning in areas like Lincoln, Dempster, and Waukegan, so additional planning efforts are probably not needed there," said Said. "But our other non-residential areas are our industrial parts of town, and we can focus now on them as well."

The hidden beauty in zoning and planning

Dean said that interaction with local municipalities is a crucial part of the GO TO 2040 plan, especially as a way to develop thoughtful communities.

"Zoning and regulations drive land use, and such planning really shapes the way our communities look," said Dean. "So really even though it's not glamorous, and to a lot of people it's flatly boring, it really does affect the character of communities and the way that they look."

Often, zoning codes developed 30 years ago can have a big impact on how the community can develop today, according to Dean.

CMAP looks for municipalities that cannot afford planning staff, but need to take a fresh look at their community plans. Morton Grove, with three main traffic corridors on Lincoln Avenue, Dempster Street and Waukegan Road, is one example of a community that evolved quickly with commercial development as a main priority.

"Today there are a lot of communities, especially older ones with established land-use plans, that cannot support planning staff," said Dean. "We certainly would be interested in hearing from them about what they would be interested in."

Background on GO TO 2040 plan

Funding for the 10 additional staff comes from federal money.

In the fall of 2010, [CMAP received \\$4.25 million](#) in grant money from the U.S. Department of

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Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to help implement the GOTO 2040 plan.

“It was a big deal because it was a national competition,” said Dean.

With the funding, Dean estimates the technical assistance program will create 10 big projects and a few smaller projects. Projects’ timeline will range from two months to 18 months depending on the particular project. The winners will be announced in the next few months.

What it means to Morton Grove

The technical assistance for communities like Morton Grove aims to target a larger question about quality of life, according to another CMAP spokesperson.

“Quality of life attributes, such as a downtown where people like to congregate; the option to bike or to take a train; whether or not you have sidewalks; these are some of the smaller things that can make a big impact on livability.”

For Said, the potential assistance means two things.

“For one, the free service is almost like free money...as we obviously have financial challenges, the assistance would be right in line with what we want to do,” he said. “And secondly, as a result of getting this help, the industrial plan would allow us to carry a plan the for future.”

“Overall, it means guidance for the future of the village,” Said said.