

## Nonprofit planning group Metropolis Strategies to close

By Thomas A. Corfman March 20, 2014

Metropolis Strategies is closing its doors in May after a 15-year run in which the nonprofit group tried to elevate the level of regional planning, with a particular focus on transportation issues.

"The original plan was not to be a permanent organization, in part so that we could be collaborative with other organizations," said George Ranney, a co-founder of the group, originally called Metropolis 2020.

Funding was not a factor in the board's decision to shut down, said Mr. Ranney, Metropolis' president and CEO.

"We've raised over the years \$40 million, so we are still going strong on that score," he said. Metropolis had total revenue of \$3.7 million on expenses of \$2.2 million in the fiscal year ended Sept. 30, 2012, the most recent year for which financial information is available. The group's expenses exceeded revenue by nearly \$332,000 in fiscal 2011.

The MacArthur Foundation has been a key funder, providing \$4.4 million in financial support since 2003, according to the Chicago-based philanthropy's website. Other important funders have been the Chicago Community Trust and the Elizabeth Morse Genius Charitable Trust.

Corporations also have long supported Metropolis, which was originally sponsored by the Commercial Club, a business group.

### OTHER GROUPS WILL TAKE OVER PROJECTS

Metropolis' ongoing projects will be taken over by other groups, Mr. Ranney said. Metropolis has 12 employees.

Metropolis played a key role in the 2005 creation of the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning, a state agency that combines land-use and transportation planning, Mr. Ranney said.

Metropolis' board had considered closing in 2009 but opted to extend the run.

The decision to close May 31 was made in part to coincide with the end of the current session of the Illinois General Assembly, which is expected to consider an overhaul of the Chicago area's commuter systems.

Mr. Ranney, 73, is co-chairman of Gov. Pat Quinn's Northeastern Illinois Public Transit Task Force, which is scheduled to make recommendations by March 28 to improve public transit and eliminate fraud and waste.

The decision to shut down may spark concerns that other nonprofits won't pick up the work Metropolis has done. Mr. Ranney said much of the group's planning activities already have been taken over by others.

Andrew McKenna, who was Metropolis' founding chairman, said in a statement, "I am confident that the individuals who advanced Metropolis's work and helped change the way the region thinks and acts will remain involved, working with partners who have come to trust and respect them."

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