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## Metropolis Strategies policy group is closing

### Organization focused on economic development, transportation

By [Alejandra Cancino](#), Tribune reporter

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Metropolis Strategies, an influential policy organization that focused on economic development and transportation, is closing effective May 31.

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Some of Metropolis Strategies' planning work will be taken on by CMAP, World Business Chicago and the Cook County Council of Economic Advisors, said George Ranney, president and chief executive of the business-backed group.

Ranney, 73, said he plans to finish a transportation report for Gov. Pat Quinn and stay on top of the issue. Paula Wolff, a senior executive who focuses on justice and violence, will continue to be financially backed, though details haven't been worked out yet, Ranney said.

The organization was founded in 1999 with the idea that it would have a five- to 10-year life span, he said.

Metropolis Strategies has published reports on regional economic development and transportation. It was unusual in that it pushed for funding and legislation to carry out its recommendations.

Robert Weissbord, president of RW Ventures, an economic development firm, said the organization's reports helped bring focus to an underperforming regional economy. Its reports were effective, he said, because the group enjoyed close connections in both the private and public sectors, and it didn't waste time figuring out how to stay alive.

"We have been blessed with excellent funders," Ranney acknowledged.

The organization raised more than \$40 million in its 15 years and had a yearly budget of between \$2 million and \$3 million, he said. It had a staff of about a dozen, most of them volunteers. Metropolis Strategies ended its 2012 fiscal year with \$1.8 million in net assets, according to its latest publicly available financial statement.

Metropolis Strategies was founded by the Commercial Club of Chicago.

Ranney said he was ready to retire five years ago, but the board persuaded him not to.

"I had to keep going, so we did for another five years," said Ranney, founder of the Regional Transportation Authority.

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