

Nongovernmental organizations

While most of the recommendations of GO TO 2040 are directed to the public sector — as befits a plan focused on public policy — many other nongovernmental organizations in the region play major roles in the areas covered by GO TO 2040. These include philanthropic organizations, civic organizations, community-based nonprofits, advocacy groups, and some types of membership organizations. This section uses case studies to provide positive examples of how these groups can help to implement GO TO 2040, and contains many links to CMAP's website for more information.

How Nongovernmental Organizational Decisions Affect Plan Implementation

The metropolitan Chicago region has a rich variety of nongovernmental organizations that seek to improve the prosperity and livability of our region. Together, these groups exert significant influence on public policy and private decision-making, and are significant players in the future of our region. Their potential roles in plan implementation vary based on organization type; a few examples are below.

Philanthropic organizations provide funding for many different types of initiatives, including some that are central to GO TO 2040. These organizations can fund activities that are generally outside of the scope of the public sector, and have the ability to quickly redirect funding in response to new threats and opportunities. Partnerships between philanthropic organizations and the public sector can be quite effective, and a notable example includes the Regional Indicators Project, a joint effort of CMAP and the Chicago Community Trust. These partnerships can pair the flexibility of private funding with the institutional capacity of government, and GO TO 2040 recommends a number of areas where this type of arrangement would help to implement the plan.

While contributing funding is an obvious way to affect the priorities of GO TO 2040, there are many other ways that nongovernmental organizations can contribute to the plan's implementation. They can contribute research and make recommendations, advocate for legislative changes, and push the public sector toward better decision-making, among other actions. Some nongovernmental organizations serve an important role in convening government agencies and other advocates; examples of this include Chicago Wilderness (CW), which convenes environmentally-focused groups, or the Urban Land Institute (ULI), an organization of development and real estate professionals. Nongovernmental groups are active at a variety of levels, from those that cover the entire region (and often beyond) to those that focus their efforts in a single community or neighborhood.

Clearly, the organizations and roles above only scratch the surface of what nongovernmental organizations undertake. A full description of their current activities and possible future work is beyond the scope of this document, which focuses on how they can help to implement the specific recommendations of GO TO 2040. The plan supports further efforts by these groups to improve our region's prosperity and livability in ways not specifically discussed on the following pages.

Livable Communities

Livability is a complex topic, made up of a variety of elements. Nongovernmental organizations can play a direct role in some of GO TO 2040's high-priority recommendations concerning livable communities, in the areas of land use and housing, resource conservation, open space, and local food, and their role extends far beyond these topics.



In collaboration with Chicago Metropolis 2020, the Metropolitan Mayors Caucus has produced a series of reports entitled [Homes for a Changing Region](#). The first report forecast a serious mismatch between the type of housing being planned in the region and the housing likely to be needed by its expected 2 million new residents. Subsequent reports took the next step and developed detailed, community-specific plans aimed at providing a balanced housing supply for Aurora, Libertyville, Oak Forest, Gurnee, Montgomery, Northlake, Blue Island, Plainfield, and Woodstock. Image courtesy of [Chicago Metropolis 2020](#)

Land Use and Housing

GO TO 2040 emphasizes the importance of local land use regulation in creating livable communities. While regulation of land use is a public sector activity, there are ways for nongovernmental organizations to contribute to this goal. Technical assistance to municipalities is a central part of GO TO 2040's approach to livability, and nongovernmental organizations can play a major role here. For example, the American Planning Association (APA) can assist in providing training to local planning commissioners concerning their responsibilities. As another example, groups like the Metropolitan Planning Council (MPC), Chicago Metropolis 2020, or the Metropolitan Mayors Caucus (MMC) can provide assistance to communities in addressing their affordable housing needs through locally-appropriate strategies. GO TO 2040 recommends that nongovernmental organizations like these work closely with CMAP to coordinate technical assistance activities and partner in their implementation where appropriate.

There is also a potential role for philanthropic groups in this area. They often fund civic or nonprofit organizations to do the types of technical assistance described above, and can even have a role in funding certain elements of local comprehensive planning.



Throughout the City of Chicago, neighbors have come together to turn vacant lots and other unused open spaces into vibrant community gardens and parks. To ensure that the urban "Edens" they worked so hard to create will no longer be vulnerable to redevelopment, local residents and community groups can turn to NeighborSpace, who will acquire the land on their behalf, set up a long-term management agreement with the community, and provide liability insurance for those who use the site. Image courtesy of [Quinn Dombrowski](#)

Resource Conservation

GO TO 2040 prioritizes actions that the region and its communities can take to limit energy and water consumption and to manage stormwater. Among the plan’s key recommendations is the implementation of the Chicago Region Retrofit Ramp-Up Program (CR3), which seeks to facilitate the retrofit of existing buildings in the region for increased efficiency. This program was initiated by a joint effort of governmental and nongovernmental organizations; the latter included the Chicago Community Trust and the Center for Neighborhood Technology (CNT), among other groups. Further collaborations of this sort can be helpful in addressing the complex challenges that the region faces.

Open Space

GO TO 2040 recommends the expansion and improvement of parks and open space in the region. A significant role can be played by both funders and environmentally-focused nongovernmental organizations. Philanthropic groups, including land trusts, are major funders of open space acquisition, improvement, and restoration. The actions of these organizations can be most effective when they complement the public sector’s role, and GO TO 2040 recommends development of shared regional priorities that both the public, nonprofit, and private sectors can use to guide investment decisions. Beyond funding, other nongovernmental groups can also contribute to improving our region’s open space through convening environmental stakeholders, research and policy development, education and advocacy, direct implementation, or other methods.

Local Food

GO TO 2040 identifies a major role for nongovernmental organizations in supporting local food systems. Philanthropic organizations can continue to fund the work of nonprofit groups that actively work on and advocate for local food issues. They also can play a role in supporting public efforts meant to increase access to healthy food, such as matching public financing to spur private investment in grocery stores in “food deserts,” or linking local food and anti-hunger programs. On the food production side, philanthropic groups can be active in supporting urban agriculture and the creation of community gardens. Often, the efforts that are funded by philanthropic groups are implemented by community-based nonprofit organizations, giving them a central role in GO TO 2040’s approach to local food as well.

Other Actions That Support Livable Communities

Nongovernmental organizations can and do take on a variety of other issues that make our communities more livable. These include investments in **arts and culture**, **crime** reduction strategies, programs that improve **relations between ethnic or racial groups**, strategies that improve **health**, and many others. GO TO 2040 supports the continued work of nongovernmental organizations in these areas.



Fresh Taste is a nonprofit organization dedicated to creating a region that offers communities equal access to a healthy, sustainably produced, and affordable food supply. Fresh Taste aims to bring about this vision by stimulating system-wide change through collaborative work — internal collaboration, as well as supporting collaborative work among a wide range of community-based nonprofit organizations, private businesses and the public sector. Image courtesy of [Piush Dahal](#)

Human Capital

GO TO 2040 recognizes that the region's workforce is a major contributor to its future economic prosperity, and a strong role for nongovernmental organizations is recommended.

Education and Workforce Development

GO TO 2040 identifies a philanthropic role in funding efforts to improve workforce development coordination and alignment with the needs of employers, including analyses of career pathways and specific drill-downs into the needs of some specific industries. Beyond philanthropic organizations, nonprofits are identified as the primary organizations that could perform this research. GO TO 2040 also calls upon diverse stakeholders, including nongovernmental groups with expertise in education, to address education quality, equitable access, and improved collaboration.

Economic Innovation

GO TO 2040 identifies a vital role for nongovernmental organizations in supporting economic innovation. Specifically, philanthropic groups can often move more quickly than the public sector in response to market trends, and may be able to provide much-needed startup or commercialization assistance and create linkages between researchers and entrepreneurs.

Other nongovernmental groups are already taking significant roles in promoting innovation, including business development groups like the Chicagoland Chamber of Commerce, coalitions of economic development organizations like Metropolitan Economic Growth Alliance (MEGA), and universities and other research institutions. GO TO 2040 supports the continued work of these groups and encourages them to coordinate at the regional level.



Originally established through a church-based volunteer program in 1977, Instituto Del Progreso Latino has become a leading city and state educational center. Instituto provides many services and programs to raise education levels and provide job skills. One example is ManufacturingWorks, a training program that responds to employers' needs in the manufacturing industry. ManufacturingWorks works with businesses to identify skill-gaps in the existing workforce and aligns training programs to meet the needs of manufacturing companies. ManufacturingWorks is a collaborative program between Instituto and the City of Chicago. Image courtesy of Flickr user [elfon](#)



The Chicago Manufacturing Center (CMC) is a nonprofit sustainability strategy and operations consulting firm. The CMC works with manufacturers throughout the Chicago region to support their ability to be a competitive, thriving, and innovative business. The CMC also works with government agencies and the private sector to strengthen the manufacturing sector. In addition to one-on-one consulting, the CMC has several innovative initiatives to promote creativity, sustainability, and profit, including the Waste To Profit Network. The Waste To Profit Network brings companies together to build relationships and identify opportunities to transform waste streams into resources for others. Photo courtesy of [iStockphoto.com](#)

Efficient Governance

Nongovernmental organizations have historically supported good governance, and GO TO 2040 identifies a continued role for these activities. The Regional Indicators Project, a continuing partnership between CMAP and the Chicago Community Trust, will include MetroPulse, a user-friendly website that allows the user to download, graph, and map data from a variety of government sources. This product illustrates the benefits of collaborations between the public sector and philanthropic organizations, and further partnerships of this sort are encouraged by GO TO 2040.



The Red Line extension project would extend the Chicago Transit Authority's (CTA) most heavily-used rail line for an additional 5.5 miles south to 130th Street in the City of Chicago. Its current terminus, at 95th Street, is currently the station with the highest ridership outside of downtown Chicago. For years the Developing Communities Project (DCP), a faith-based organization serving the Greater Roseland neighborhood, has helped to facilitate communication between residents in this area, community leaders, and the CTA, mobilizing resident involvement in advocating for the extension, as well as actively participating in the determination of the Locally Preferred Alternative (LPA) route. DCP continues to engage residents and the local business community in planning for TOD around the four proposed new train stations. Image courtesy of Developing Communities Project

Regional Mobility

GO TO 2040 targets most of its recommendations related to regional mobility to public sector organizations, as they are the primary owners and operators of the region's transportation system. However, while they are rarely implementers of actions in this chapter, nongovernmental organizations can play an important role in research and analysis, and can also effectively advocate for certain policies or investments to be pursued. For all of the high-priority recommendations related to regional mobility — transportation finance, public transit, and freight — this kind of supporting role for nongovernmental organizations is identified.



The Metropolitan Planning Council (MPC) has partnered with the Tollway to study congestion pricing on a number of expressways across the region. This detailed research has helped to increase the understanding of stakeholders across the region of the potential benefits of congestion pricing. Image courtesy of [Quinn Dombrowski](#)