

Franklin Park residents weigh in on village's future

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Franklin Park residents shared their ideas about the strengths and challenges of the village for its new comprehensive plan at a meeting last week.

"We've applied to numerous grants through Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning and other bodies out there looking at how can improve the village and what's our vision for the future," said John P. Schneider, the director of community development and zoning for Franklin Park. "I'm looking for a comprehensive plan that is implementation-oriented."

Village officials are partnering with CMAP, the agency behind a plan for the Chicago area called Go To 2040, to create a new comprehensive plan that will shape Franklin Park for the next 10 to 15 years.

"I'm definitely happy that they're figuring out this roadmap moving forward," said Jennifer Darling.

Darling, who moved to the village with her family less than a year ago, was one of about 40 residents and representatives of various governmental agencies who gave their feedback about to village at the public kickoff of the project Tuesday, Aug. 4.

During the hour-and-a-half meeting, residents said Franklin Park's location next to O'Hare Airport, the Tri-State Tollway and the three Metra stops that connect the village to Chicago were all strengths that have improved quality of life for residents. Additionally, residents also agreed that the village's 800 industrial and commercial businesses and assets provide jobs for residents, contribute to the local tax base, and regularly give back to the community. Finally, responsive village staff, police and fire departments, affordable housing, high-quality schools and diversity in residents were also considered pluses for the village.

But while commuter trains were hailed as an asset, freight trains, and more specifically the safety horns they blow at rail crossings, were considered a nuisance that hurts the quality of life for residents living near the tracks.

Village Engineer Dave Talbott says silencing those freight trains horns will take more than a comprehensive plan, as creating a quiet zone requires approval from federal officials.

"We've gone through the initial part of a process with the [Federal Railroad Administration] and we're preparing to submit a letter of intent to create a quiet zone in the village," said Talbott.

A related issue residents hope the new plan addresses is the traffic congestion that happens when trains cause north-south traffic to stop as trains travel through the village.

Other issues residents hope the plan addresses is alleviating the flooding in the core areas of the village, increasing pedestrian safety and access around rail crossings and making the village more bicycle friendly.

"Creating a livable community starts at the local level and that translates into creating a livable town," said Sam

Shenbaga, a senior planner with CMAP. "That's why we created the Local Technical Assistance program. It's worked with communities over the past three years to help local planning projects move forward."

The planning process is currently analyzing the Franklin Park's existing conditions using information gathered from a steering committee, interviews with key stakeholders, a community workshop, economic and demographic data, and existing plans and studies. The next phase will capture a shared vision for the future of Franklin Park and identify specific goals and objectives necessary to achieve that vision and is expected to begin sometime in November. Residents who wish to give feedback online or learn when the next public meeting on the project is being held can [visit CMAP's website](#).

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