News

What Will 2040 Look Like for Deerfield?

Go To 2040 Plan takes global approach toward preparing for a sustainable and prosperous future.

By Claudia Lenart | Email the author | May 28, 2011

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In the year 2040, the Chicago suburbs will consist of livable communities where people can walk or ride their bikes to the store. Residents will be healthier with access to trails and open space, and they'll eat more fresh, locally produced food. The worker of 2040 will have shorter commutes and more public transportation options. And government will be more efficient with a more fair tax structure.

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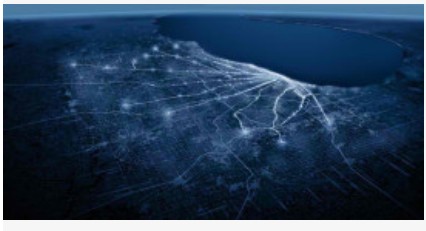

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That vision of the future is uncertain, but it is in the plan Go To 2040, devised by the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP). The regional plan includes Cook, Lake, McHenry, DuPage, Kane, Kendall and Will counties.

For the plan to work, the seven counties need to work cooperatively, CMAP Executive Director Randy Blankenhorn said.

"If you just call it the CMAP plan, it's nothing. It needs to belong to you. You need to own it. We need to think together how to move this forward. We will not be successful if we don't change the way we are," said Blankenhorn, who was the keynote speaker at the County Green, a sustainability-focused conference that took place at the College of Lake County on Tuesday.

The Go To 2040 is the first regional plan since Daniel Burnham's in 1909. Area leaders recognized in 2005 that the bigger challenges the Chicago region faces, such as water scarcity, transportation and environmental threats, need a regional solution.

In October of 2010, all seven counties adopted the Go To 2040 plan. Lake County's representative on the CMAP board is Elliott Hartstein, former Buffalo Grove president.

"Go To 2040 is dedicated to strengthening the region's communities and ensuring economic prosperity," Blankenhorn said. "The bottom line of the plan is that it enhances our economic position in a global economy and builds strong communities. If you don't have strong communities you don't build jobs."

There are four themes in Go To 2040 – Livable Communities, Human Capital, Efficient Governance and Regional Mobility.

Livable Communities

Livable communities create a sense of place, according to the Go To 40 plan. They are healthy, safe and walkable. The plan seeks to distribute new development closer to existing development.

"People are willing to live in a more compact way, but they need parks close by that are safe and convenient," Blankenhorn said.

Livable communities also manage and conserve water and energy resources, expand and improve parks and open space, and promote sustainable local food.

Blankenhorn noted that there are only two regional plans across the country that include locally grown food as part of the plan.

Human Capital

The region's economy needs skilled workers and a climate where business creativity can flourish, according to Go To 2040.

"We can't talk about how to succeed without talking about children. We have to do a better job at grade school level and higher education needs to be more affordable across this region. How do we train for tomorrow's worker, not yesterday's worker," Blankenhorn said.

Efficient Governance

The 2040 plan calls for more streamlined and accountable government; residents need better access to information, units of government need to coordinate or consolidate efforts to be more efficient and tax policies need to be reformed.

"There are too many small units of government. We have to rethink how we are delivering services, not reducing services, but more efficiently delivering services.

Taxpayers expect us not to duplicate, to be efficient," Blankenhorn said.

The seven metropolitan Chicago counties have a total of 1,226 units of government, which includes villages, townships; school, park, library and fire districts, as well miscellaneous districts.

Regional Mobility

The plan notes that a vital transportation system is crucial to economic prosperity and quality of life.

Blankenhorn told the audience it took him two hours to get from Chicago to CLC. He would have liked to take public transportation, but it would not have gotten him to the college.

The plan calls for a commitment to public transportation, a more efficient freight network and an investment in major transportation projects. One of the highlighted projects is an extension of Route 53.

Pat Carey, a panelist at County Green and Lake County board representative for Grayslake Dist. 11, said "We need to start thinking of things differently. What really doesn't work is transportation and what really doesn't work is tax policy. We need to start thinking about issues from a regional perspective. I think we have the bones to make it work, but it's a question of everybody in the room participating. We can't rely on Springfield, because it's either completely dysfunctional or challenged."