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Government

What Will 2040 Look Like?

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

By [Claudia Lenart](#) | [Email the author](#) | June 1, 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.

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, Will, DuPage, Lake, McHenry, Kane and Kendall 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 at a recent sustainability-focused conference in Lake County.

The Go To 2040 is the first regional plan since Daniel Burnham's famed 1909 plan. 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.

The Southwest Cook and Will representatives to the CMAP board are [Gerald Bennett](#), mayor of Palos Hills, and [Roger Clear](#), the mayor Bolingbrook.

"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

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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. The plan calls for a commitment to public transportation, a more efficient freight network and an investment in major transportation projects.