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Yorkville ponders its future as a 21st-century river town

Comments

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By ROWENA VERGARA rvergara@scn1.com

YORKVILLE -- Imagine this scenario for downtown.

Pedestrian-only streets would lead to condos, restaurants and shops off Bridge Street between Van Emmon and Hydraulic streets, roughly.

Around the corner, you could peruse a farmers market at a public plaza.

Hop on a train departing from a depot at the bottom of City Hall, and that could take you to another high-speed transit or a Metra commuter train. In the evening, stroll the pedestrian bridge over the Fox River.

What you're looking at is a "21st-century river town."

Those were just some of the ideas suggested by a team of designers and planners from the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP) that presented a revamped downtown to the public Thursday night.

CMAP is an advisory agency for the Chicagoland area that suggests strategies for growth and development for the region that haven't been tapped to their full potential.

Smart development

CMAP chose Yorkville as a test market for new ways of development, specifically focusing on transportation, housing, water, education, jobs, air quality and other quality-of-life issues.

Their mission is to help communities grow and develop in smart ways for at least the next 40 years through their campaign called GoTo 2040.

Other communities chosen for the campaign were neighborhoods surrounding the University of Illinois at Chicago campus and Rogers Park in Chicago, as well as Sugar Grove, Streamwood, and Fairmont in unincorporated Lockport Township.

The meeting, attended by residents, aldermen, city staff and Plan Commission members, touched on a question that residents say needs to be addressed before any further studies are made: Could downtown Yorkville potentially move east or west in the next 20 to 40 years?

Some residents said all the rapid growth, foot traffic and amenities are most logical along Route 34 where retail, government and business have expanded in the last few years.

Mark Schwamel, a designer with architectural and planning firm Gensler, counteracted those remarks.

"Don't sell yourself short. I think it would be a lost opportunity if it was just the kayak chute and the park" in downtown Yorkville, he said.

Alderman Robyn Sutcliff also redirected comments from residents questioning the current downtown's potential for redevelopment by talking about the proposed whitewater rafting concept along the Fox Valley that could involve Yorkville.

"I think we need to look outside of what we like. This isn't just about us," she said. "It's about bringing people from outside of Yorkville

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