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Mapping 2040

*Rogers Park residents want green buildings,
higher-quality affordable housing*

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By the year 2040, the total population of McHenry, Lake, Kane, DuPage, Kendall, Will and Cook counties is expected to surpass 10 million people, up substantially from the 8 million residents counted in 2000.

A crowd of 25 gathered on March 4 at Loyola University's Centennial Forum Student Center to imagine how the Chicago region could plan for this growth. Those in attendance hoped that this dense new world would include a seamlessly integrated public transportation system, self-sustaining mixed-use development and higher-quality public education.

The discussions focused on the practical. There was more talk about green building than flying cars or teleportation. The meeting was part of the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning's "Go To 2040" regional planning process.

The agency is holding dozens of meetings between now and April 30 to collect visions of northeastern Illinois' future from residents in the seven-county area. The process is unfolding in two phases. The results of the phase one community discussions, like the March 4 meeting, will be posted at www.goto2040.com. In phase two, CMAP will take the information and start developing "regional snapshot reports" that show how the ideas can be realized. The Go to 2040 plan will be completed by 2010.

"So far we've seen a lot of people wishing that there was better transportation to get to jobs, better housing and more affordable housing," said Erin Aleman, an assistant community planner with CMAP. "If those are the things that are going to improve people's lives today, and between now and 2040, then that's great."

CMAP—a consolidation of the Northeastern Illinois Planning Commission (NIPC) and the Chicago Area Transportation Study (CATS)—was established in 2005 to examine planning throughout northeastern Illinois. Illinois and federal law requires CMAP to build a long-range schematic for land use and transportation.

DevCorp North, a business, community and economic development agency in Rogers Park, was one of ten Chicago-area organizations awarded a \$5,000 CMAP grant to host two to three meetings. The next meeting will be held from 6 to 8 p.m. Tuesday, March 18, in the Centennial Forum Student Center on Loyola's Lake Shore campus.

"I expected an interesting and interactive conversation about the future, and I think that's what we got tonight," said Kimberly Bares, executive director of DevCorp.

DevCorp and CMAP have worked together before. In 2004, when CMAP was known as NIPC, the organization awarded DevCorp a three-year federal grant as part of the Full Circle neighborhood mapping project.

"We've had really good experience working with NIPC/CMAP, and we saw this as an opportunity to come to the community and offer an opportunity to dialogue where there are no winners and losers," Bares said.

"This is an opportunity to say to CMAP, and for CMAP to then say to our legislators and our policy makers, 'These are the things that are important to people,'" she said. "'We've got a lot of work to do and a lot of time to be able to do it.'"

As a regional planning agency, CMAP works with 283 municipalities and a total of 8.3 million people. The phase one meetings are drawing an average of 25 to 50 people, Aleman said.

"There's all these traditionally underrepresented neighborhoods and communities, and we want to reach out to the most people that we can," Aleman said.

Aleman said encouraging people to think decades ahead can be a challenge.

"It's extremely hard to compete with things like people's family life," she said. "Unless you tell somebody that their house is going to get bulldozed tomorrow, it's hard to get people to come out and talk about the future."