Regional planning agency seeks public input for future projects

Comments

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A chance to help develop economic, environmental and transportation plans for the Chicago metropolitan area awaits those attending a workshop this month in Elmwood Park.

The Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning is holding an "Invent the Future with Go to 2040" workshop from 7 to 9 p.m. Aug. 19 at Elmwood Park Village Hall, 11 Conti Parkway.

"We're seeking input from citizens regarding their feelings about greenways, transportation systems, population density," said Alan Bennett, agency board member and Elmwood Park village trustee. "Should we de-emphasize urban sprawl and concentrate on public transportation or should we emphasize highway investment instead of in public transportation?

"These are some of the issues. There'll be discussions, and votes taken.

"We will determine at the end of workshop what the consensus of the participants is."

Participants will be using keypads to vote, he said.

The workshop is one of many the agency is holding throughout the metropolitan area in preparation for a new comprehensive plan, Bennett said.

"That includes land use and transportation planning," he said. "The goal is to complete a plan that will provide an outlook for what people feel the region should look like in 2040.

"The game plan is to finalize this sometime next fall. The regional comprehensive plan will encompass all aspects of greenways, population density, transportation, including public versus highways.

"The plan will be advisory. Land use will still be a local prerogative, and the ultimate decisions still will reside with local political entities."

The comprehensive plan will serve as a guideline for very large projects that could affect neighboring communities, such as the amount of waste water generated if a large number of acres is paved over, Bennett said.

"If you have an extremely large project, there has to be a review process to bring neighbors on board," he said. "You have to determine the implications – transportation, environment, neighboring communities. Will a project be located near an environmentally sensitive area?"

Because of the importance of planning for the future, Bennett said he would like to have a "nice turnout" for the workshop.

"In this context, it's kind of like the Burnham Plan that created the park system, boulevards and forest preserves in Chicago," he said. "It's the 100th anniversary of that plan."

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