Project Description:

The City of Waukegan is requesting CMAP's assistance with the drafting of a new Unified Development Ordinance. While numerous amendments have been made to the existing Zoning and Subdivision Ordinances, the original ordinances were approved in 1987, at the same time as our last Comprehensive Plan. We wish to replace those with a comprehensive Unified Development Ordinance.

At the time our current ordinances were drafted, Waukegan's lakefront was home to thriving manufacturing companies, which have since departed. Today, our lakefront stands as a redevelopment opportunity, alongside important recreational amenities and Waukegan's downtown, surrounding a convenient transportation hub with access to Metra and Pace. Much of Waukegan's growth in recent years has been on its western edge, with commercial growth primarily in the southwest corner of the City. Central and eastern Waukegan has seen disinvestment and a lack of economic opportunity (as highlighted in ON TO 2050), but were once vibrant areas of our community. These areas have many strengths, including infrastructure, public transit connections, and walkability, and they afford tremendous redevelopment opportunities, which should employ principles of transit-oriented development, walkability, and smart growth initiatives. Redevelopment opportunities open the door to housing types that are currently non-existent in the Waukegan area. Waukegan has suffered disinvestment, and growth has been limited, particularly in the areas now ripe for redevelopment.

Waukegan has three Opportunity Zone Census tracts, four Tax Increment Financing districts and an Enterprise Zone to incentivize high-quality new investment. Waukegan has also joined the Lake County Land Bank. These tools, coupled with a Unified Development Ordinance, can help us grow effectively while maintaining the qualities that make Waukegan a unique and special place that has attracted generations of people from across the world. We want to maintain our heritage and history, while growing and creating new opportunities for our community and its residents to thrive.

In 2018, the City of Waukegan, through an RFP process, selected a team led by RATIO Architects to develop a new Comprehensive Land Use Plan for the City. RATIO's work has been underway for the past year, and will go through approvals over the coming months. The progress of the Comprehensive Plan can be followed at www.PlanMyWauk.com. This plan, like the CMAP ON TO 2050 Plan, will look to resilience, inclusive growth, and prioritization of investments as key components for Waukegan's long-term sustainability and growth. We are excited that our comprehensive planning process follows CMAP's, and can look to the CMAP plan for direction and guidance.

The City believes a new Unified Development Ordinance should quickly follow the Comprehensive Land Use Plan. This collection of guiding documents will help direct Waukegan's future growth and build its economic strength. We want to create the proper framework to enable Waukegan to redevelop and grow under modern regulations reflecting the current and best practices in planning and development. CMAP's support with a Unified Development Ordinance will help ensure the implementation of that vision.

This Unified Development Ordinance would be a replacement for Waukegan's existing Zoning Ordinance and Subdivision Ordinance, which can be found here:


Subdivision Ordinance: http://www.waukeganil.gov/DocumentCenter/View/559

Project Location: This project, the drafting of a Unified Development Ordinance for the City of Waukegan, will be undertaken within the city limits of the City of Waukegan, in Lake County.