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CMAP Regional Excellence Award winners recognized for their work to build an inclusive, thriving northeastern Illinois

CHICAGO, October 7, 2021 — The Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP) honored local leaders and community projects through its [Regional Excellence Awards](#) program during its inaugural State of the Region event today.

The five winners exemplify the hard work being done to make northeastern Illinois a better place to live, work and do business. A panel of judges selected two visionary leaders and three planning projects that prioritize equity, strengthen regional resiliency and make communities more economically competitive.

“Today, CMAP paid tribute to some of our partners for serving the public with perseverance and passion,” CMAP Executive Director Erin Aleman said. “The stories behind each project and leader highlight why our region remains a vibrant place that connects people to opportunities.”

Equity with Impact Award

Winner: Austin Coming Together

A community organization, Austin Coming Together mobilized residents, organizations and financial resources to improve quality of life for the people living in this Chicago west side neighborhood. More than 500 community stakeholders contributed to the Austin Forward. Together plan, shaping strategies to address economic development, education, housing and other issues. The plan has generated over \$14 million in investment since it launched in 2018.

Partners for Progress Award

Winner: Village of Bedford Park

The village of Bedford Park worked with officials in Cook County and the Regional Transportation Authority to develop and launch Connect2Work, an innovative pilot program that allows users to select the right transportation option for their needs. Travelers in the area can use a mobile app to find the fastest available public transit route, free shuttle rides during rush hour and discounted rates for late-night and last-mile rides. More than 2,700 rides have been booked through Connect2Work since it launched in December 2020.

Regional Resilience Project Award

Winners: Lake County Forest Preserve District, Metropolitan Water Reclamation District, Village of Buffalo Grove

All three winners of the Regional Resilience Award worked collaboratively on a \$9.7 million project to expand the Buffalo Creek Reservoir and increase the region's resiliency against flooding. The project expanded the capacity of wetland terraces, improved erosion control and added recreational amenities for users. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers estimated the project will reduce future flood damages by more than \$26 million.

Visionary Leader Award

Winner: Brian Sager, former mayor of Woodstock

As mayor of Woodstock for 16 years, Brian Sager worked to make the city more inclusive and economically competitive before retiring from local office earlier this year. Under Sager's leadership, Woodstock accomplished numerous feats, including expanding transportation options for residents. From supporting arts and culture to improving quality of life for senior residents, Sager led multiple efforts to make Woodstock a better community.

Winner: Allison Swisher, director of public utilities for Joliet

Allison Swisher recently led Joliet through securing an entirely new water supply. She gathered representatives from all over western Will County and formed a planning group to study its depleting groundwater source. Swisher also launched Rethink Joliet Water to explore different water source alternatives, promote water conservation and provide a regional solution. Joliet currently is designing infrastructure to transport sourced water from Lake Michigan.

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About CMAP

The Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP) is northeastern Illinois' comprehensive planning organization. The agency and its partners developed ON TO 2050, a long-range plan to help the seven counties and 284 communities of our region address transportation, equity, environmental and other quality-of-life issues. Visit CMAP's website for more information.