

# THE CONNECTOR

## Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning's APA award well deserved



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Congratulations to the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning for winning the American Planning Association's National Planning Excellence Award for a Planning Agency!



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January 9, 2013 [Post a comment](#)

Congratulations to the staff and board of the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP) for earning the [American Planning Association's \(APA\) first-ever National Planning Excellence Award for a Planning Agency](#).

The award "honors the work of a public sector planning agency that has continually produced a program of exceptional work that has elevated awareness about planning." That APA chose CMAP as the best embodiment of that charge, among all other planning agencies in the running and despite that CMAP has existed for just seven years, is impressive on its own. Yet those of us fortunate to work directly with Randy Blankenhorn and the CMAP staff as they creatively advance planning in our region know well that APA's words capture just part of CMAP's success story.

MPC was among the advocates and business leaders that strongly advocated for and heralded CMAP's formation in 2005, and we've benefitted from a strong working relationship with the agency since Day One. Soon after being established, CMAP got to work on the agency's innovative [GO TO 2040 regional comprehensive plan](#), adopted in 2010, which helps northeastern Illinois seven counties (Cook, DuPage, Kane, Kendall, Lake, McHenry and Will) and 284 municipalities coordinate policies and investment decisions. The plan itself is the best plan – the most comprehensive, coordinated and pragmatic plan – our region has ever had. However, I would argue that it is CMAP's bold leadership that makes the agency stand out among its peers.

CMAP not only has shown leadership on our shared agenda – a Chicago region where all residents have access to a strong economy, vibrant neighborhoods, first-rate housing, and

residents have access to a strong economy, vibrant neighborhoods, first-rate housing and transportation, and valuable natural assets – but also a range of other important issues and challenges, such as [state and local tax policy](#), [efficient governance](#), and [local food systems](#). By guiding the region's future, the agency is blazing the trail for what a Metropolitan Planning Organization should be.

CMAP balances and informs its policy initiatives with [unprecedented technical assistance to local communities and governments](#). In 2012, the first year of CMAP's Local Technical Assistance Program, the agency initiated some 75 technical assistance projects; in 2013, they approved an additional 48 projects, even as work continues on some 2012 efforts – daunting figures. But CMAP wisely has elected not to go it alone, and instead has diligently engaged a wide range of civic partners, including MPC, to support these planning and implementation projects. We're proud to be among more than 15 civic partners who meet regularly with CMAP staff to provide guidance and direct their own planning staff and resources in support of Local Technical Assistance projects. Not only is this coordination supporting community partners, but it also is strengthening the region's overall coordination of planning and implementation, reducing duplicative efforts, and maximizing each organization's role and impact.

All of us at MPC – our staff and volunteers, past and present – raise a glass to CMAP, and I look forward to being in the crowd on April 13 when the APA presents this well-deserved award to CMAP. I'm sure I'll be among dozens of friends and colleagues who agree that CMAP's formation was the right move – that CMAP is making our region stronger, today and for the future, and that we ought to continue to ensure this award-winning, trailblazing agency has the resources and tools it needs to plan for and guide an ever-growing Chicago region.