ENGAGING CITIES

Tracking Urban Planning 2.0

GoTo2040.org: Social Media and Regional Planning

The Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP) has launched their initiative 'Go To 2040' in June 2008. 'Go To 2040' arose from the desire to create a comprehensive master plan for Metropolitan Chicago that addressed not only land use and transportation, but quality of life issues as well. CMAP sought to gather as much input from the public as possible in creating this master plan and interestingly social media was a key element of their efforts to attract and involve more people in a sustained and on-going manner throughout the process.

CMAP first developed a well-structured website, but acknowledged the need to provide relevant information on their site to keep visitors coming back. The website itself features an interactive calendar, comprehensive strategy reports, a project timeline and blog. The blog is updated almost daily and, without being dull, it succeeds in containing useful information on economic development, the environment, land use, and transportation.

But where does social networking come in? CMAP uses Twitter, Facebook, Flickr, and You Tube to connect to the greater population and funnel them to the Go To 2040 website. Their home website is sprinkled with icons to social media outlets for easy tweeting and updating. All new blog posts, announcements, event reminders, You Tube videos etc. are posted on Twitter and Facebook. You Tube is used to post videos from community workshops and also host marketing videos for the project. Flickr is used to store images from CMAP's kiosk outreach centers and other events. Citizens can also upload pictures they've taken into a Flickr pool called "Explore Northeastern Illinois". One uploaded photo is featured on the blog every Monday with a brief history of the neighborhood or particular site in the picture, and of course credit is given to the photographer.

The social networking strategy of the campaign seems to be maintained well and updated frequently. They have over 650 followers on Twitter and hundreds of photos on Flickr. Facebook appears to be their latest effort, with around 300 fans. Only time will tell how fruitful their efforts will be, but we in our eyes, Go To 2040 is leading by example to get planners to better integrate social media into their projects.

See for yourself at: http://www.goto2040.org/

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