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Residents, stakeholders come together to discuss change



Andres Torres, an outreach associate for CMAP, addresses the crowd during a workshop at Gail Borden Public Library in Elgin on Thursday. (Megann Horstead, The Courier-News)

By **Megann Horstead**
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Many think of change not only as a product of chance but also design.

That's where the discussion began during a [Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning](#) workshop on Thursday at Gail Borden Public Library in Elgin.

Planning for change requires the regional planning agency, known as CMAP, to research any existing problems, work to create solutions and collaborate with others to form a plan.

"The goal of agencies like ours not just in our region but at the local and the county level is to make sure that change as it comes is beneficial," said Andres Torres, an outreach associate for CMAP. "Even if change brings it challenges, (planning ensures) that we are positioned to overcome those challenges. That is why we do a lot of planning at multiple levels."

The workshop was one of several first steps in the agency's effort to develop and adopt the new ON TO 2050 comprehensive plan, which will serve residents and stakeholders in the northeastern Illinois counties of Cook, DuPage, Kane, Kendall, Lake, McHenry and Will.

In October 2018, the ON TO 2050 comprehensive plan must be adopted for the region.

In March, CMAP started the researching process. Since that time, Torres said the planning agency has met with 6,000 people, hosted more than 100 events and reached out to the communities in the region both digitally and in person.

As an example, Torres noted the agency's mission to examine the effectiveness of the Fox River's connection to the various developments in neighboring communities, including Elgin. He said people will often understand what they're experiencing most easily at the local level.

That's not always the case, Torres pointed out.

"But there are some challenges that we can't tackle as a municipality — changes like in the environmental scale, economic scale," he said. "Some of these need to be coordinated taking into account how other municipalities near you, how counties — that are maybe a couple counties away — how they're changing what policies they're implementing because those can ultimately affect what your daily life is like."

He said the ON TO 2050 comprehensive plan holds benefits to stakeholders in terms of providing a foundation for policies and guidance on land use, transportation plans and the way in which communities are interconnected.

In northeastern Illinois, there are 284 municipalities, seven counties and 8.5 million people.

At the workshop, many participants expressed their top concern for regional planning being economic development.

Denise Raleigh, a spokeswoman for the library, said that's where the role of the library enters the discussion on bringing change to the region.

"By virtue of our partnership and outreach, we relish the opportunity," she said.

The library started hosting a program called Manufacturing Your Future the past three years. In it, Raleigh said, community youths were educated on various jobs made available to them.

"We want to help where we can," she said. "We have trained professional staff and resources."

Raleigh said when the community succeeds economically, that changes life in the region, and the library is responsive to that.

"We are part of the life here," she said.

For information on CMAP, go to www.cmap.illinois.gov.

Megann Horstead is a freelance reporter for The Courier-News.

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