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~~Maine, Northfield Township Study Launches~~

## Some Fear Incorporation: CMAP Officials Attempt To Calm Concerns

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By TOM ROBB Journal & Topics Reporter

**T**he Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP) started a comprehensive planning process for unincorporated areas of Maine and Northfield townships last month.

Tuesday, Nov. 15 saw nearly 40 Northfield Township residents crowd into the fieldhouse at Crowley Park in Glenview for a presentation on CMAP's Maine-Northfield Unincorporated Area Plan. The study has an expected 18-month timeframe.

CMAP officials kicked off the Maine-Northfield plan with their first meeting Oct. 19 at the Golf Maine Park District's Feldman Recreation Center in Niles.

Maine and Northfield townships have the highest concentrations of population in unincorporated areas in the state of Illinois. Of 135,772 residents living in all of Maine Township, which includes parts of Niles, Park Ridge, Des Plaines, Glenview and Morton Grove, 30,043 live in unincorporated portions.

In Northfield Township, which includes most of Glenview, 13,787 of the township's 85,102 residents live in unincorporated areas.

These unincorporated areas have never had a comprehensive land plan, CMAP project manager John Carlisle said. The goal of the Maine-Northfield plan is to look at four issues: flooding, land use including housing and zoning, quality of life including transportation, and identity.

Carlisle said the study is being conducted using five geographic sub-areas to address more localized concerns.

He said CMAP is looking for Maine and Northfield residents to provide feedback through an online survey at [mainenorthfield.metroquest.com](http://mainenorthfield.metroquest.com), a

Facebook page and other public meetings.

The survey page includes a map allowing residents to pinpoint areas of concern and address issues, from housing quality to open space to public transit to economic development.

Maine Township Supervisor Carol Teschky said she hoped to see flooding and zoning issues addressed in her township. She said substandard housing approved by Cook County has “run rampant” in Maine since the 1960s.

Teschky said townships were initially set up as social welfare agencies and were not meant to provide the kinds of services municipalities do.

Carlisle said he has been, or soon would be, in contact with officials from area school districts serving the two communities, as well as park and library districts. Conversations would also include agencies like the Pace suburban bus system.

A 14-member steering committee is helping guide the Maine-Northfield CMAP planning process, which includes local officials.

Members of the steering committee include Teschky, Northfield Township Supervisor Jill Brickman, Maine and Northfield township highway and road district representatives, representatives of planning or economic development departments from incorporated municipalities, representatives of Cook County commissioners Gregg Goslin (R-14th), Sean Morrison (R-17th) and Peter Silvestri (R-9th). Silvestri is Cook County’s representative to CMAP. The steering committee also includes the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District (MWRD) of Greater Chicago, Metropolitan Planning Council and CMAP officials.

Some residents approached the meeting skeptically. In 2012, Cook County Board President Toni Preckwinkle issued a report calling for all unincorporated areas of Cook to become incorporated. The report, in part, cited the cost to the county to provide services that municipalities already provide their residents. Reacting to that report, municipal leaders rejected the idea that they should pick up those costs.

A September 2016 Civic Federation report, which built on an earlier 2014 Civic Federation report, recommends incorporating unincorporated areas with the aim of reducing costs to Cook County.

The Civic Federation is a non-partisan government research organization which sees its mission as, “working to maximize the quality and cost-effectiveness of government services in the Chicago region and State of Illinois.”

Residents attending the Nov. 15 meeting in Glenview articulated fears the study would lead to the elimination of their township or a merger of Maine and Northfield townships.

Carlisle said no plans exist to merge or eliminate townships. Teschky said any change or elimination of townships would need to be done in Springfield. So far the only recent legislation regarding townships would allow for the elimination of townships that share the exact same borders as a municipality, such as the city of Evanston and Evanston Township.

Townships have existed across Illinois since the 1850s based on a model brought forward by American founding father Thomas Jefferson.

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