

Gazette Chicago » CMAP considers Bridgeport and Canaryville planning

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Courtesy CMAP

As part of its Go To 2040 plan, CMAP looks at areas such as public transportation that could improve communities. Above is a rendering of what a refurbished Chicago Transit Authority Red Line station at 35th Street might look like.

By Rick Romano

A regional planning agency will provide technical assistance to Bridgeport and Canaryville beginning in early 2018 so those neighborhoods have a blueprint for making future improvements.

The Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP), an agency created by the State Legislature in 2005, recently selected a joint proposal by the local neighborhoods. It is one of 34 projects in 2017 that CMAP selected from 80 proposals that the agency received from across northern Illinois. CMAP also began working with Chinatown in 2014.

The latest local project has CMAP working with Bridgeport and Canaryville to “Develop a planning priorities report that promotes sustainable business, retail, and economic development; strengthens local educational and cultural institutions; and builds on area assets

including housing stock, access to public transportation, and resident population,” according to CMAP.

CMAP’s local technical assistance leaders said the neighborhoods are overdue for assistance.

“There hasn’t been a lot of community planning” in those areas, “so this is a good time for this to happen,” said Noah Boggess, the CMAP project manager who will work directly with Bridgeport and Canaryville. He said each project has a team that first works to build a community steering committee and then to arrange confidential stakeholder interviews with “significant actors” including individuals, nonprofits, and businesses in each community. The project will conclude with a priorities report.

Boggess and CMAP director Steven Ostrander estimate this initial process will take six to eight months, with a full plan in a year.

“We will spell out some key components of the plan with recommendations,” Ostrander said. “There might be a very clear project or a focused area that needs to be addressed. The focus could be, for example, a commercial corridor. It all depends on where the conversation leads. We are very open minded.”

Ostrander and Boggess said addressing Bridgeport and Canaryville together makes sense because the communities share at least in part similar histories, infrastructure, and population.

Leaders’ application

Those ties led to the request for CMAP assistance by 11th District Cook County Commissioner John Daley and 11th Ward Ald. Patrick D. Thompson. Daley’s office prepared the application, which emphasized a need for economic development because those neighborhoods are so close to the “economic engine that is the city’s downtown region,” the application said.

Daley and Thompson also submitted letters of endorsement.

“I’m always looking for opportunities to assist residents, community groups, and businesses,” Daley said, noting the project will position the neighborhoods for the future.

Thompson said, “Constituents from Bridgeport and Canaryville have expressed their concerns about the future vibrancy of their neighborhoods.”

In response to the project’s approval, Daley said, “We are appreciative of CMAP selecting these neighborhoods. It’s always important to get a better understanding of how the community has changed and what can be done to keep making it successful.

“What unites us is strong churches and strong families, so we want to look at opportunities for land use, business development, residential, and transportation,” Daley said. “While we are different communities, we have more in common.”

Community involvement

The CMAP interview and priority setting process is meant as a prelude—generating local interest and motivation—to each community’s hands-on engagement with or without further requested CMAP assistance.

While Bridgeport and Canaryville begin their planning process with CMAP, neighboring Chinatown is working on strategies identified in a CMAP 2014 Vision Plan that rolled into 2015 strategies.

The CMAP process enhanced an already engaged community, said C.W. Chan, chair of the Coalition for a Better Chinese Community. He noted the number of individuals interviewed during the process rose to 2,000, well beyond the original estimate of what was needed.

The 2015 Chinatown strategies include improving communication to strengthen the community and reduce crime, strengthening the connection between new and old Chinatown, making Chinatown age friendly, increasing capacity to build on its tourism potential, improving options for high school students and their parents, engaging stakeholders in community maintenance, defining future development, improving working relationships with neighboring communities, and increasing opportunities for planning input.

Chan said the community is following CMAP’s process by involving local stakeholders to work through the strategies.

In addition, CMAP has approved a request for a Chinatown parking management study. The coalition noted, “It is increasingly important to fully determine the amount and type of metered, restricted, and unrestricted parking and identify opportunities for shared parking.”

With the Bridgeport/Canaryville plan coming, Chan said planning is vital beyond Chinatown’s borders.

“Chinatown is 100 years old,” he said. “We are part of connected neighborhoods, and we want to continue to be part of the neighborhoods.”

About CMAP

The Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning was created under the authorizing legislation known as State of Illinois Public Act 095-0677. It operates as the planning agency for 284 communities in Cook, DuPage, Kane, Kendall, Lake, McHenry, and Will Counties. It is 80% Federally and 20% State funded.

Officials established its local technical assistance arm in 2010.

The agency currently is working to implement its Go To 2040 plan to address how an anticipated growth of two million residents will affect transportation, housing, economic development, open space, the environment, and other quality of life issues in the area.

CMAP and its partners also are developing On To 2050, a new comprehensive regional plan slated for adoption in October 2018.

For more detailed information about CMAP and its technical assistance program, visit www.cmap.illinois.gov/. To offer comments, call (312) 454-0400. To contact Daley and Thompson's office to offer input, call (773) 254-6677.