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Update

CMAP kicks off Bridgeport and Canaryville plan

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Editor's Note: The "Update" section provides the latest information on news items that the Gazette has covered in previous editions.

Immediate and long-range planning to address needs in Bridgeport and Canaryville are underway with help from a regional agency that is working with volunteer citizens as well as local elected officials.

The Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP) kicked off its efforts recently with an advisory committee meeting to introduce the process and begin identifying the neighborhoods' needs.

Noah Boggess, CMAP project manager, said about 20 people attended the meeting at the 9th District Police Station at Halsted and 31st Streets. They included private citizens as well as Cook County Commissioner John Daley and 11th Ward Ald. Patrick Thompson and their staff members.

The project aims to identify long-range economic development needs while addressing more immediate concerns.

Boggess noted, "When we met with the advisory group, the library plaza space" at the Richard J. Daley Branch "came up a number of times. That is an underutilized area and could be a good project to develop community based activities such as a farmer's market or art fair."

Though a smaller opportunity such as energizing the library plaza may not be the ultimate goal, he said, planning for such a project helps keep the community engaged while longer range plans develop.

"We will have an open house community event sometime after the fourth of July," Boggess said. "We will develop outreach materials for that event and for surveys, and we will be publishing them in three languages: English, Spanish, and Chinese."

After gathering responses from the community event and from surveys—both in print and online—CMAP will develop a plan for Bridgeport and Canaryville leaders.

Two advisory group members help represent community diversity.

Mike Zhou is the executive director of Bridgeport's Zhou B Art Center, established in a former 7,800-square-foot former Spiegel Warehouse at 1029 W. 35th Street. Zhou, whose family came to Chicago from China 20 years ago and has been involved in the arts, received an invitation to join

the advisory group in late April. Carrie Hermle is a fourth generation resident of Canaryville. The legal secretary connected with Boggess shortly after reading that CMAP selected the neighborhood to address its needs.

Zhou said the arts community has and will continue to spark development.

"The artists attract business activation," he said. "Coffee shops and other retail make Bridgeport and other surrounding areas stronger."

Hermle said the CMAP project is important to ignite change.

"What I'm hoping for is that, even if nothing gets done right away, it gets residents and business owners talking about what needs to be done."

She noted Bridgeport and Canaryville—once rivals—need to work together to attract millennials and others.

"When you look around, everything looks the same," she said. "There's just less of everything."

The Bridgeport and Canaryville efforts are the result of CMAP's accepting a proposal, one of 34 the agency selected for support in 2018. In January, Boggess and CMAP director Steven Ostrander noted the community drives the project.

"There might be a very clear project or a focused area," Ostrander said. "We are very open minded."

The local proposal application came from Commissioner Daley and Ald. Thompson. In their proposal letters, they wrote that constituents of both neighborhoods had expressed concerns "of the vibrancy of both neighborhoods" and that is vital to "get a better understanding of how the community has changed and what can be done to keep making it successful."

Daley further noted Bridgeport and Canaryville are linked.

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

CMAP was created 2005 and, under the authorizing legislation known as Public Act 095-0677, 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.

The agency currently working under 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.

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

For more detailed information about CMAP and its Local Technical Assistance program, visit www.cmap.illinois.gov/. To contact Daley's or Thompson's office, call (773) 254-6677.

—***Rick Romano***