



Embedded Staff Planner Program: Action Plan for the Village of Sauk Village September 2019 – February 2020

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Introduction

This section provides an overview of the Embedded Staff Planner program, timeline for the project in Sauk Village, and description of the initial activities and key themes that informed the creation of this action plan.

About the Embedded Staff Planner Program

With the adoption of ON TO 2050, the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP) began developing a new set of targeted services aimed at building local government capacity. The Embedded Staff Planner (ESP) program, which is one component of this effort, began in 2019 as a demonstration project with a small number of municipalities. The goal of the project is to increase the agency's understanding of how to assess and build local capacity and, ultimately, to create a recommendation for a scalable program that will serve capacity-constrained communities throughout the region.

Over the three-year demonstration project, CMAP staff will be placed in six capacity-constrained communities as "Embedded Staff Planners" (herein after referred to as "Planners") to serve as temporary, part-time staff, providing flexible support for each municipality for up to a two-year period. Planners will devote three days per week to their assigned municipality, spending two days on site and the equivalent of one additional day dedicated to the community from CMAP's office. Each Planner will work with local officials and staff, as well as other CMAP staff and partners, to identify a variety of actions that they will be responsible for completing on behalf of the municipality. These ongoing and special activities will seek to build on the community's successes, promote long-range strategic planning, and achieve local and regional goals.

Sauk Village Project Timeline

In early 2019, the Sauk Village Board of Trustees approved a Memorandum of Understanding to partner with CMAP under the ESP program. The project is designed to be completed in approximately 24 months; however, the timeline may change as the program progresses.

Project initiation	Jan. – Feb. 2019 (2 months)
Phase 1: Getting to know the community	Mar. – May 2019 (3 months)*
Phase 2: Creating the action plan	Jun. – Aug. 2019 (3 months)
Phase 3: Implementing the action plan	Sept. 2019 – Feb. 2021 (18 months)
Project evaluation	Dec. 2020 – Feb. 2021 (3 months)

**Planner start date: March 11, 2019*

Getting to Know the Community

Over the first three months of the project, the Planner reviewed the Village's planning documents, conducted an inventory of past and present grants and technical assistance, and interviewed Village staff, elected and appointed officials, and other relevant stakeholders to better inform the Planner's understanding of existing conditions, needs, processes, and other considerations to develop the action plan. The following ideas came up frequently throughout these initial meetings, interviews, and other research:

- Help the Village make data-driven decisions and increase transparency;
- Enhance internal and external municipal communications;
- Capitalize on the Village's locational assets;
- Stabilize residential neighborhoods;
- Support more activities for youth and families;
- Improve the overall appearance and aesthetics throughout the Village; and
- Implement the Village's recently adopted Comprehensive Plan.

How to Use This Document

This action plan was created to clearly define, in six month increments, the work that the Planner will perform over the remainder of the two-year engagement; it does not include a comprehensive assessment of existing conditions or a full summary of the Planner’s initial activities. While the action plan can be modified by the Planner as new opportunities arise or if priorities shift over the course of the program, the purpose of this document is to present a set of priority activities to be initiated during the first six months of “Phase 3: Implementing the action plan” and reviewed and updated every six months thereafter.

Staff from CMAP and South Suburban Mayors and Managers Association (SSMMA), as well as Sauk Village staff and officials, will be asked to review the draft action plan and provide comments before the document is finalized.

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Action Plan

This section outlines the Planner’s recommendations for ongoing and special activities to be conducted through the ESP program. Ongoing activities are described generally, and special activities include an overarching goal, description, proposed CMAP and partner support, and anticipated outcome.

Ongoing Activities

Throughout the course of the program, the Planner will represent the Village at regional meetings, such as CMAP and SSMMA board and committee meetings and meetings with other partners, and bring back new ideas and opportunities. The Planner may encourage other Village staff and officials to attend these external meetings as well.

The Planner will also act as staff liaison for several grant and technical assistance projects currently underway, working closely with Village staff and officials, consultants, South Council Planning Liaison, Cook County Department of Transportation and Highways, CMAP, and other agencies. Current projects include: Phase 1 Engineering for LogistiCenter Road and Rail Expansion (Cook County’s Invest in Cook program); Phase 1 Engineering for Shared-Use Path on Sauk Trail (CMAP’s Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality program); Village-wide Pavement Management Plan (CMAP); and Stormwater Master Plan for North and Deer Creek Subbasins (Metropolitan Water Reclamation District).

Special Activities

In addition to supporting the program’s ongoing activities, the Planner will also take on special activities, as time allows. The status of activities will be assessed every six months to report on progress and determine the Planner’s capacity to take on additional activities in the action plan.

Transportation Investment Programs: Funding Projects

Goal: To expand the capacity of the municipality to access and navigate transportation investment programs.

1. Create a detailed implementation plan to improve connectivity and pedestrian safety

Sauk Village Lead:	Community and Economic Development Department
CMAP Support:	Kama Dobbs, Barbara Zubek, Jen Maddux
Partner Support:	SSMMA, Cook County, IDOT
Outcome:	Brief memo that can be easily understood and used by Village staff and officials; staff training on transportation investment programs
Future Phases:	Apply for funding and/or incorporate projects into budgeting
Metric:	Number of submitted funding applications; training attendance

The Planner will create a project implementation plan (in the form of a brief memo) that defines and schedules the major phases of work needed to develop a safe, continuous multi-use path from Bloom Trail High School to the Plum Creek Forest Preserve. The plan will provide the following information in a clear and easy-to-read format: overall timeline; number and brief descriptions of project phases; major activities and deliverables to be achieved during each project phase; potential fund sources and associated application timeframes; and anticipated roles and responsibilities for Village staff, officials, and community stakeholders. The plan will be used to catalyze implementation, as well as monitor and assess ongoing activities, and incorporate into budgets and capital improvement plans.

2. Explore options to connect to regional greenways and trails

Sauk Village Lead:	Community and Economic Development Department
CMAP Support:	Kama Dobbs, Barbara Zubek, Jen Maddux, John O’Neal
Partner Support:	SSMMA, Cook County, IDOT, CN Railway
Outcome:	Recommendations memo outlining future steps

Future Phases:	TBD
Metric:	-
<p>The Village is seeking to develop the continuation of Old Plank Trail for a regional east-west trail connection, extending from Indian Hill Woods Forest Preserve in Chicago Heights through Sauk Village to the Indiana border, and to create a multi-use trail along Torrence Avenue to connect to the Burnham and Pennsy Greenways. The Planner will engage SSMMA, Enbridge Energy, the railroad, and other partners to discuss potential lease agreements and, based on the results of those conversations, develop recommendations for next steps, such as developing a funding plan and coordinating with neighboring municipalities and other partners.</p>	

Capital Improvement Program: Inform the CIP Process

Goal: To strengthen the municipality's capital improvement program.

3. Assess existing conditions to inform capital improvement priorities

Sauk Village Lead:	Public Works Department
CMAP Support:	Agata Dryla-Gaca, Nora Beck, Kate Evasic, Interns
Partner Support:	SSMMA, MWRD
Outcome:	Recommendations memo ("CIP Phase 1") outlining future steps for development of a capital improvement plan
Future Phases:	Develop a capital improvement plan
Metric:	Use in Village budgeting processes; amount of funding secured for priority capital projects; community benefit

The Planner will assist the Village to collect and procure data on the condition of various capital facilities and equipment, such as roadways, sidewalks, rail crossings, stormwater and wastewater infrastructure, municipal facilities, equipment, and vehicles, and quantify the costs and timeframes associated with building, repair, and replacement of these facilities and equipment. Ultimately, through a follow-up action, the Planner will assist the Village in developing a capital improvement plan, which will serve as a guide to prioritize capital projects and purchases over the next five years. It will also serve as a resource to help the Village match eligible projects with external funding sources.

4. Address water losses and support water conservation activities

Sauk Village Lead:	Public Works Department; Public Services Committee
CMAP Support:	Nora Beck, Margaret Schneemann
Partner Support:	IEPA, MWRD
Outcome:	Water loss audit; recommendations included in "CIP Phase 1" memo
Future Phases:	TBD
Metric:	Water use and loss rates

Investments need to be made to maintain the Village's water distribution system, address water loss, and add filtration improvements, while studying the feasibility of accessing Lake Michigan water. As a first step, the Planner will assist the Village in conducting a water loss audit, using the M36 tool developed by the American Water Works Association, to identify where water loss is occurring in the system, and use this information to inform the development of a capital improvement priorities report. At the same time, the Planner will identify ways to practice water conservation in public facilities and advertise those activities and programs to residents and businesses.

Public Engagement: Create Communications Strategy

Goal: To enhance engagement of residents and improve responsiveness to residents' needs.

5. Create an external municipal communications strategy

Sauk Village Lead:	Public Relations Committee
CMAP Support:	Tina Fassett Smith, Mandy Burrell, Melissa Silverberg, Jane Grover
Partner Support:	-
Outcome:	Recommendations memo outlining best practices and potential new or updated policies
Future Phases:	Implement recommendations; staff training
Metric:	Performance of website or other channels

The Planner will conduct a comprehensive review of current municipal communications (Village website, social media accounts, and CodeRED public alert and warning system, among others), survey residents to find out which channels they use, and develop recommendations on how the Village can best utilize these and other channels to enhance engagement of residents. The Planner will help incorporate the recommended improvements into existing processes and connect staff and officials to relevant guidelines, best practices, and trainings.

6. Coordinate regular community events aimed at attracting youth and families

Sauk Village Lead:	Public Relations Committee
CMAP Support:	Tina Fassett Smith, Mandy Burrell, Melissa Silverberg, Jane Grover
Partner Support:	-
Outcome:	Conduct one community-wide event; advertise and share successes according to the Village's communication strategy
Future Phases:	Assist with planning for future events
Metric:	Event attendance; frequency of events

The Planner will work with staff and officials to identify and coordinate service opportunities, holiday celebrations, and other community events to engage youth and families in the Village. The Planner will help ensure that the events are advertised according to the Village's communication strategy.

Governance: Assess Processes

Goal: To identify opportunities to improve service delivery and support effective government.

7. Explore how the Village can use and optimize the value of GIS services

Sauk Village Lead:	TBD Department
CMAP Support:	Agata Dryla-Gaca, Kate Evasic, Interns
Partner Support:	SSMMA
Outcome:	Create a pilot GIS database with one Village department; staff training to operationalize GIS
Future Phases:	Identify GIS needs for other departments and expand GIS database; consider options for contracting GIS services
Metric:	Staff utilization rate; efficiencies gained

The Planner will lead development of a comprehensive Geographic Information System (GIS) database that can be used by Village officials and staff to improve infrastructure management, prioritize capital projects, and support community and economic development activities, among other uses. GIS can serve as a key component of Village operations, allowing for the efficient management, analysis, and visualization of community information, and can also be integrated into the Village website to make that data available for resident and business use. With the data compiled in a central location and in an easy-to-use, digital format, the Village can make smarter, more calculated decisions

on how to best target its resources. To start, the Planner will explore how GIS can help the Village, identify data and application needs, and work with one department to pilot the use of GIS services, then expand the effort as needed or desired.

8. Create networking opportunities for municipal staff

Sauk Village Lead:	Community and Economic Development Department
CMAP Support:	Gordon Smith, Simone Weil
Partner Support:	SSMMA
Outcome:	Directory for peer networking; conduct first meeting
Future Phases:	Coordinate meetings on an ongoing basis
Metric:	Meeting attendance; frequency of meetings

The Planner will coordinate a regular peer networking event for municipal staff to share experiences, discuss challenges and needs, develop solutions, and promote regional and sub-regional best practices. These meetings will be informal, coalesce around community and economic development staff, and draw participants from nearby municipalities. The Planner will also explore opportunities for multi-jurisdictional coordination and collaboration through this activity.

9. Review the Village’s appointed board structure and membership

Sauk Village Lead:	Mayor’s Office
CMAP Support:	Simone Weil, Stephanie Levine, Dominick Argumedo, Kendra Kuehlem
Partner Support:	-
Outcome:	Recommendations memo outlining potential structure and procedure changes; membership directory
Future Phases:	Implement recommendations; schedule annual meeting of all boards
Metric:	Annual meeting attendance

The Planner will inventory the membership, purview, and meeting frequency of each appointed board, and make recommendations aimed at helping to facilitate a robust implementation of the Village’s long-range plans, sustaining the enthusiasm of members, and creating a pipeline of community leaders. The Planner will also work with the Mayor to convene a meeting of all boards to talk about priority issues.

10. Assess municipal data management practices

Sauk Village Lead:	Mayor’s Office
CMAP Support:	Dominick Argumedo, Kendra Kuehlem
Partner Support:	-
Outcome:	Recommendations memo; creation of project steering committee
Future Phases:	Implement recommendations
Metric:	-

The Planner will lead assessment of existing record keeping across all departments, produce an advisory memo with recommendations for next steps, and work with a convened project team to implement improvements (to include digitization of records and cross-training of staff).

Land Use Planning: Advance Local Plans

Goal: To build the municipality’s capacity to develop and implement short- and long-term plans, policies, and programs for land use, transportation, economic development, natural resources, and governance.

11. Pursue strategic partnerships to support neighborhood stabilization efforts

Sauk Village Lead:	Housing Committee
CMAP Support:	Jonathan Burch, Elizabeth Scott

Partner Support:	MPC, IHDA, Land Banks, Rebuilding Together Metro Chicago
Outcome:	Prioritize next steps to revive the housing market in specific areas; networking for Village officials and staff
Future Phases:	TBD
Metric:	Number of vacant/abandoned homes
<p>The Planner will engage with partners, including CMAP, SSMMA, and the Cook County and South Suburban Land Bank Authorities, to strategize the best approach for targeting housing stabilization efforts within the Village. Related activities may include completing an existing conditions survey of all vacant/abandoned properties and working with the land banks to identify potential buyers of these properties. The Planner will also pursue funding and programmatic support from CMAP's Homes for a Changing Region program, IHDA, Rebuilding Together Metro Chicago, and Habitat for Humanity, among others.</p>	

12. Update the Village's Zoning Code to support the vision of the Comprehensive Plan

Sauk Village Lead:	Plan Commission; Ordinance Review Committee
CMAP Support:	Kristin Ihnchak, Dominick Argumedo, Kendra Kuehlem
Partner Support:	-
Outcome:	Recommendations memo outlining proposed text amendments to the Village's zoning ordinance; engaged Plan Commission
Future Phases:	Draft text amendments; present proposed changes to Plan Commission and Village Board
Metric:	Utilization of new development regulations

The Planner will address the Comprehensive Plan's recommended regulatory revisions during one process to update the Village's zoning ordinance. The number of recommended code revisions presented in the plan underscores the importance of this task in achieving many of the community's goals. Examples include: expanding housing options to meet demand for new and renovated housing; permitting new uses, such as community gardens, in residential zoning districts; encouraging retail development along Sauk Trail at I-394 and Torrence Avenue; and updating stormwater development standards. Other text amendments may be proposed based on the Planner's stakeholder interviews and other initial phase activities.

13. Assess existing sustainability initiatives and conditions

Sauk Village Lead:	Mayor's Office
CMAP Support:	Kristin Ihnchak, Dominick Argumedo, Kendra Kuehlem
Partner Support:	MMC, Elevate Energy
Outcome:	Recommendations memo outlining next steps
Future Phases:	Implement recommendations
Metric:	Sign on to the Greenest Region Compact

The Planner will assess existing sustainability initiatives and conditions as a baseline for developing strategies and recommendations. The recommendations will focus on municipal facilities and operations, connecting the Village with existing programs that align with community plans, and raising awareness about sustainability Village-wide and encouraging involvement from residents and businesses.

Training and Outreach: Facilitate Professional Development

Goal: To connect the municipality with professional development opportunities.

14. Provide the Village Board with customized trainings on priority topics

Sauk Village Lead:	Mayor's Office
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CMAP Support:	Kristin Ihnchak, Nora Beck, Other Staff TBD
Partner Support:	MPC, Other Partners TBD
Outcome:	Conduct one training and share corresponding materials; networking for Village officials and staff
Future Phases:	Coordinate additional trainings
Metric:	Training attendance; percentage of annual budget for training

The Planner will work with the Mayor and Trustees to identify technical training topics to benefit the Village Board, as well as other elected officials, appointed officials, and staff, and facilitate and/or coordinate trainings that cover these topics. The intent of the trainings will be to build expertise, provide continuing education, and encourage discussion around topics of relevance to local government decision-makers. Potential topics include water supply planning and housing issues.

Economic Development: Develop Strategies

Goal: To build the municipality's capacity to attract advantageous development projects.

15. Support and expand the capacity of economic development efforts

Sauk Village Lead:	Community and Economic Development Department
CMAP Support:	Gordon Smith, Simone Weil, Jonathan Burch
Partner Support:	Cook County, SSMMA, SSEGI, CSEDC
Outcome:	Networking for Village officials and staff with nonprofits and other organizations active in redevelopment of the Chicago region
Future Phases:	TBD
Metric:	-

The Planner will support efforts to secure advantageous developments in the Village's industrial parks and commercial areas along Sauk Trail and Torrence Avenue. These activities could include: engaging with Chicago Southland Economic Development Corporation to promote the Village; reviewing the Village's website and recommending updates; creating marketing materials; or assessing the viability and effectiveness of strategies to attract development projects that drive economic growth, create high wage jobs, and facilitate improved quality of life.