



Metropolitan Planning Council

Overview

Founded in 1934, Metropolitan Planning Council (MPC) is a non-profit group of business and civic leaders that promote planning and development policies in Greater Chicago. MPC conducts policy analysis, outreach and advocacy in partnership with public officials and community leaders to improve equity of opportunity and quality of life in the region. In the last three or four years, MPC has become more “business-led,” and its 60-member Board now includes a majority of business leaders, along with other private-sector leaders from labor and the universities. MPC’s regional priorities are transportation, affordable housing, equitable school funding and regional development/smart growth.

Regional Priorities

The Metropolitan Planning Council has worked to persuade city-based affordable housing advocates that affordable housing is both an urban and a suburban issue.

MPC has promoted employer-assisted housing, by which businesses help employees buy homes closer to work. It has also urged Illinois Governor Rod Blagojevich to implement a September 2003 executive order on housing and has urged the passage of legislation that would provide down payment assistance for public school teachers to buy homes within their school districts if they work in low-performing schools.

MPC co-leads “Business Leaders for Transportation” with Chicago Metropolitan 2020 and the Chicagoland Chamber of Commerce. The group of 180 business organizations representing 12,000 employers was created in 1997 to act as a voice for Chicago-area employers on surface transportation issues in the region. MPC tends to be the coalition-builder in the partnership — prodding the regional transportation authorities and governing bodies along on reform.

The Metropolitan Planning Council has also worked on school funding issues. MPC helped launch the A+ Illinois initiative in February 2004. A+ Illinois is a statewide campaign to reform the funding and quality of public education. It is designed to help

ORGANIZATIONAL SNAPSHOT

Type of Organization

Primarily led by companies or employers

Unit of Membership

Individual

Number of Members

2003: 60

1998: 60

Membership by Company Size

Small Companies: 5%

Mid-sized Companies: 50%

Large Companies: 45%

Dues Determined by

Voluntary contributions

Annual Dues Paid by

Largest Member Companies: N/A

Smallest Member Companies: N/A

Annual Operating Budget

2003: \$2 million to less than \$5 million

1998: \$1 million to less than \$2 million

Staff Members (FTE)

2003: 23

1998: 14

Board Members

2003: 60

Regional Priorities

Transportation, Affordable Housing, Equitable School Funding, Regional Development/Smart Growth

struggling students and schools meet state standards while preserving high-quality education where it already exists. A+ Illinois follows up on a previous MPC project known as the “Network 21: Quality Schools for Stronger Communities” initiative.

A final priority is smart growth. Among other projects, MPC is prodding the City of Chicago to recognize its diverse neighborhoods as it rewrites its 1957 zoning code. MPC designed a zoning code strategy to help communities have a voice in how their neighborhoods are zoned. According to the strategy, volunteers are recruited to learn basic zoning concepts and then file a zoning report on their community. MPC examines the report and recommends new zoning categories that will help the community in the citywide zoning process.

Structure and Operations

The Metropolitan Planning Council has 60 members, which remains unchanged from five years ago, though in other areas it has expanded. Its annual operating budget was between \$2 million and \$5 million in 2003, up from between \$1 million and \$2 million five years earlier, and its number of full-time staff rose from 14 to 23 over the same period. Half of its members are classified as large companies, while only 5 percent are small companies.

The Metropolitan Planning Council has 60 Board members. MPC, which was founded in 1934, is made up mostly of “second-tier” business leaders and focuses on long-term coalition building. The Boards of MPC and Chicago Metropolis 2020 are intermingled. Three leaders of Chicago Metropolis 2020 — George Ranney, Paula Wolff, and King Harris — are members of MPC’s Board. MPC President Mary Sue Barrett is a member of Chicago Metropolis 2020’s Executive Committee. George Ranney, MPC’s Vice Chairman, was one of the founders of Chicago Metropolis 2020 and helped avoid any fallout between the two groups when Chicago Metropolis was created five years ago.