

MPC



History of Progress

1934 – present



Executive Director
Council President
Chicago Mayor

Elizabeth Wood
(1934-1937)

John R. Fugard
(1934-1936)

Edward J. Kelly
(1933-1947)

D.E. Mackelmann
(1937-1941)

Alfred Shaw
(1936-1937)

Ferd Kramer
(1937-1941)



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In the 1930s, far too many Chicagoans lived in overcrowded, rat-infested, tenement slums without electricity or running water. Poised for change, in 1934, a group of concerned citizens founded the Metropolitan Housing Council (MHC). Led by Executive Director Elizabeth Wood, they wasted no time in advancing their three primary objectives for improving the city's housing stock: enforcing standards, collecting statistics, and promoting neighborhood planning. By decade's end, the Council had made considerable headway in clearing Chicago's slums, establishing itself as a "no-nonsense" civic powerhouse.

1935

MHC's newly formed Women's Division surveys slums for code violations to pressure the city to hire more inspectors.

1939

MHC lobbies the Works Progress Administration to finance a Chicago Land Use Survey, using the data as a foundation for the Council's burgeoning neighborhood planning work.

1934

At the Century of Progress World's Fair in Chicago, MHC volunteers transform a Chicago shack into a "Cape Cod Cottage" in one day, proving it is possible to change the city's slums.

MHC incorporates as a nonprofit, with membership by invitation.

1937

MHC influences passage of the Illinois Housing Act, which – along with the Public Works Administration and federal Housing Act of 1937 – leads to Chicago's first public housing and the creation of the Chicago Housing Authority (CHA). Elizabeth Wood, MHC's executive director, is tapped to head CHA.

1939

MHC leads the revival of an almost-dormant City Plan Commission, which is subsequently integrated into city government.

1930s

Stuart Sinclair (1941-1942) Hilda Gitlin (1942-1943) Dorothy Rubel (1943-1946)

Robert E. Mann (1946-1947) Dorothy Rubel (1947-1974)

George Bates (1941-1942) John Fugard (1942-1943) Ferd Kramer (1943-1956)

Martin H. Kennelly (1947-1955)

1940s

As soldiers shipped off by the thousands, Chicagoans in the early 1940s were acutely aware that World War II colored every aspect of their lives. For MHC, slum clearance remained a major concern; yet the Council also proposed and ultimately led the Chicago region's Defense Housing Committee, charged with managing war-related housing problems. After the war, as reunited families settled into new homes and looked forward to "getting back to normal," the Council ramped up its planning efforts to prepare for growth on a scale never before experienced.



PHOTO COURTESY OF CHA

1944

MHC's Post-War Planning Committee makes recommendations for managing the anticipated surge in metropolitan expansion.



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1947

MHC publishes a groundbreaking slum clearance plan, sparking city, state and federal enabling legislation and spurring the creation of the city's Land Clearance Commission in 1948.

1948

To highlight its focus on regional planning, the Council changes its name to the Metropolitan Housing and Planning Council (MHPC).

1949

MHPC opens membership to the public.



PHOTO COURTESY OF CHA

Executive Director

Council President

Chicago Mayor

Joseph Pois
(1956-1959)

Howard E. Green
(1959-1960)

Richard J. Daley
(1955-1976)



To bring sanity to explosive regional growth, MHPC advocated for formal transportation and land use planning systems and, to the lasting benefit of Chicago and its suburbs, the Council's efforts met with success: both the Chicago Area Transportation Study and the Northeastern Illinois Planning Commission were established in the 1950s.

Meanwhile, in 1953, a shocking *Chicago Daily News* series raised public awareness of the city's squalid, dangerous slum conditions. The Council responded with the Citizens Committee to Fight Slums, which ultimately drafted Chicago's first-ever Housing Code.

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1957

The Council helps establish the Northeastern Illinois Planning Commission to research regional trends and lead in planning for this region's future.

.....
Chicago's first Housing Code, developed by MHPC, goes into effect.

1952

An MHPC study determines that slum prevention costs less than redevelopment, a finding that advances the Urban Community Conservation Act of 1953.

1954

MHPC develops "Tomorrow's Chicago," a textbook on city planning for use in high school civics classes.

1955

The Chicago Area Transportation Study is created to provide a 25-year strategy for regional transportation investments.

1958

The Council creates the Metropolitan Center for Neighborhood Renewal, which by 1961 would provide technical assistance to help 50 Chicago neighborhood groups develop plans to revitalize their communities.

1950s

John W. Baird
(1960-1963)

Thomas Nicholson
(1963-1966)

Robert G. Biesel
(1966-1968)

Calvin Sawyer
(1968-1970)



1960

The Council co-sponsors a national conference on “Housing the Economically and Socially Disadvantaged,” where the idea to create the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development is conceived.

1960

The Council pilots a new approach to low-income housing, providing rent subsidies to allow 100 families to move into existing, private, up-to-code rental units.

1961

The Council secures the adoption of a more efficient planning system, requiring governmental bodies to inform the Chicago Plan Commission of proposed construction.

As more people began to recognize the value in planning, a new role crystallized for MHPC: liaison.

By helping form partnerships among northeastern Illinois’ many stakeholders, the Council established itself as a catalyst for broad regional initiatives, such as the Committee on Urban Progress. The Committee addressed transportation challenges facing Chicagoland, the nation’s intermodal hub, during a major highway construction boom and the addition of O’Hare International Airport. Through its work on the Committee, the Council emerged as an authority on transportation planning, an identity that would take on even greater significance in coming decades.

1960s

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1964

MHPC assists the Committee on Urban Progress with research and study leading to “Pattern for a Greater Chicago,” a landmark document with recommendations for healthy growth of the metropolitan community.

1965

CHA and the federal government adopt MHPC’s groundbreaking approach to subsidizing low-income rental housing.

1966

Chicago approves \$195 million in bond issues, a move MHPC champions to reinvigorate community improvement programs without increasing the burden on property taxpayers.

1968

MHPC recommends the City of Chicago gain the air rights over the Illinois Central Railroad tracks to develop a proposal for a new world-class park, to be called Lakefront Gardens, in the city’s front yard.



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Executive Director

Lawrence Christmas
(1974-1979)

Elizabeth Hollander
(1979-1983)

Council President Chicago Mayor

Dale O'Brien
(1970-1972)

John Bailey
(1972-1974)

A. Andrew Boemi
(1974-1976)

George A. Ranney, Jr.
(1976-1977)

Edward Banker
(1977-1979)

Warren Bacon
(1979-1981)

Michael A. Bilandic
(1976-1979)

Jane M. Byrne
(1979-1983)

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As suburban growth continued apace, more people demanded quality public transit options. Yet no single entity existed to manage public transportation regionwide. Having proposed such an agency in 1965 and advocated for it for nine years, the Council celebrated the 1974 establishment of the Regional Transportation Authority.

Indeed, as Chicagoland grew in size and complexity, MHPC stressed the need to plan on a regional scale. For instance, the Council continued efforts begun in the '50s to protect Chicago's lakefront, and organized the statewide Illinois Futures Task Force, chaired by Council Vice President George Ranney.



1970

The Council publishes a study on the city's Housing Court, highlighting the importance of thorough inspections in preventing costly urban decay.

1972

The Council commissions author Lois Wille to write "Forever Open, Clear and Free," a historical account of efforts to preserve Chicago's lakefront.

1973

With strong support from MHPC, the City of Chicago adopts the Lakefront Protection Ordinance to prevent unwanted development.

1975

The Council partners with the Village of Oak Park – and, for the first time, uses sophisticated computer modeling – to research racial diversity in the village.

1977

In collaboration with other civic groups, the Council proposes a 14-acre addition to Grant Park called Lakefront Gardens for the Performing Arts, the forerunner to Millennium Park.

1979

The Council recommends that Chicago's North Loop Renewal Project focus primarily on retail concentration, in order to maintain State Street's historic character.



PHOTO COURTESY OF SUSTAIN

Mary Decker
(1983-1990)

James T. Otis
(1981-1982)

John M. McDonough
(1982-1984)

James T. Otis
(1984-1987)

Jay K. Buck
(1987-1989)

Lee M. Mitchell
(1989-1991)

Harold Washington
(1983-1987)

David D. Orr
(1987)

Eugene Sawyer
(1987-1989)

Richard M. Daley
(1989-present)



TONY ARMOUR

1980

The Council initiates the Second Committee on Urban Progress, later known as the MAP 2000 project.

1982

In a series of reports stemming from the MAP 2000 project, the Council recommends capital reinvestment strategies for maintaining regional infrastructure.

By 1980, Chicago had lost some 644,000 residents and 118,000 jobs, while the suburbs enjoyed healthy population and job gains. Deemed “on the brink,” the city had a clear mandate to revitalize. As plans were proposed, the Council debated and advised, weighing in on projects such as Navy Pier, McCormick Place expansion and a new Chicago Bears Stadium. Meanwhile, continued suburban growth was inevitable; but the Council pledged to ensure that poorly planned growth was not. As a Council newsletter stated, “Our goal should be to change trends where it is realistic to do so, and to face them creatively where change is unlikely.”

RON SCHRAMM

1981

MHPC releases “Housing Chicago and the Region,” a much-sought-after study of housing supply and opportunities in Chicagoland.

1983

The Council pushes the Regional Transportation Authority (RTA) to take on a greater leadership role, via amendments to the RTA Act.
The Council launches the Regional Partnership, a network of local leaders.

1985

The Council changes its name to the Metropolitan Planning Council, but continues its historic focus on housing, including a new five-year Chicago Housing Authority resident empowerment effort.
The Council successfully urges the state to take a statewide “infrastructure inventory” and create a five-year capital plan.

1988

MPC launches the Central Area Distributor Project – which in 1990 recommends implementation of the Central Area Circulator, a transit system to serve the Loop.

1980s



PHOTO COURTESY

Deborah Stone (1991-1995)
Jean Allard (1991-1996)

Council President

MarySue Barrett
(1996-present)

Board Chair

Daniel R. Toll
(1991-1994)

David E. Baker
(1994-1997)

Priscilla (Pam) A. Walter
(1997-1999)

M. Hill Hammock
(1999-2002)

Chicago Mayor

Having headed off doomsday predictions of the early '80s, Chicagoans on the brink of a new millennium had plenty of reasons to be optimistic about the future of their city: folks could spend a Saturday at Navy Pier, shop while strolling down the new-old State Street, and enjoy easier access to lakefront museums via the new Lake Shore Drive. As the Internet ushered in the era of global communications and the economy rebounded, locally the idea of intergovernmental cooperation began to take hold – and MPC was right there, keeping up the drumbeat for regional coordination and planning.



1990

The Council supports a statewide health summit, providing research on community-based healthcare strategies and the rebuilding of Cook County Hospital to better ensure equal access to immediate, quality healthcare for Cook County residents.

1992

MPC launches the Regional Civic Initiative (renamed the Regional Cooperation Initiative in 1995 and later renamed the Regional Action Agenda) to promote regional vitality through public and private sector cooperation.

1994

The Regional Public Transportation Task Force, convened by MPC at the Regional Transportation Authority's request, releases final recommendations for meeting Chicagoland's mobility needs.

1995

The Regional Cooperation Initiative publishes "Creating a Regional Community: The Case for Regional Cooperation."

1996

In partnership with the Chicagoland Chamber of Commerce, MPC organizes Business Leaders for Transportation, a coalition of regional employers advocating for improved surface transportation funding and planning.

..... MPC helps secure funding and plans for the rerouting of Lake Shore Drive, which redirects traffic to the west of Soldier Field and the Field Museum of Natural History and created the unified Museum Campus.



1998

..... MPC, along with hundreds of Chicago-area partners, launches the Campaign for Sensible Growth to encourage sustainable development.

1997

The Council leads the Reform '97 campaign, which increases Illinois school funding by more than \$1,000 per child and establishes a foundation level for school funding based on what quality schools need to educate children.

1999

MPC conducts the Regional Rental Market Analysis, sparking awareness of a growing regional jobs-housing mismatch by documenting a severe shortage of rental housing.

..... MPC and Business Leaders for Transportation support the passage of Illinois FIRST, a five-year, \$12 billion package of capital infrastructure projects that provides Illinois' first investment in school facilities and dramatically increased funds for transit.

1990s

2000s

No stranger to making connections, as the new century dawns, MPC becomes more intentional in working across issue areas -- housing, transportation, regional development, and urban development. For instance, by promoting mixed-use development near transit lines, the Council helps to advance regional goals such as preserving open space, creating new jobs and affordable housing opportunities, and improving public transit ridership.

HOLSTEN REAL ESTATE DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

2000

The federal government passes the Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA-21), a bill MPC supported as necessary to fund critical maintenance and improvements to roads and transit systems.

2002

The Illinois General Assembly passes the Local Planning and Technical Assistance Act, heralded as groundbreaking for outlining incentives to communities to create comprehensive plans.



2001

MPC launches its Employer-Assisted Housing (EAH) program, giving employers the opportunity to help employees purchase homes near work.

2002

Business Leaders for Transportation issues "Critical Cargo," a regional freight action agenda that informs the CREATE program, a nationally significant, \$1.5 billion rail infrastructure improvement plan for northeastern Illinois.

2003

The City of Chicago amends its zoning ordinance for the first time since 1957. MPC plays a key role in shaping an innovative code and helping communities use it to improve their neighborhoods.

MPC launches Bold Plans Bright Future, its first-ever campaign to raise \$14.2 million over two years for endowment, special program initiatives, and annual support.

2004

The Council, along with partners statewide, launches A+ Illinois, a coalition for comprehensive statewide education funding and tax reform.

2005

Illinois unveils its first comprehensive, statewide housing plan, which MPC helped shape.

Thirty years after MPC began the drumbeat for such an organization, the General Assembly creates Chicagoland's first comprehensive planning entity, the Regional Planning Board, through the merger of the Northeastern Illinois Planning Commission and Chicago Area Transportation Study.

RON SCHRAMM



RICHARD MARINER





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