About MPC

Metropolitan Planning Council (MPC) is an independent planning and policy organization working to address regional built environment issues through a racial and economic justice lens. MPC partners with communities, businesses, and government to advance policy and drive systemic change toward a more racially equitable and economically just Chicago region.

Mission

MPC transforms policies and practices to advance racial and economic justice in our communities, infrastructure, and public systems.

Vision

The Chicago region is a place where every community is valued, every person has a voice, and every neighborhood thrives.
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A Message from MPC Board Chair

Dear Friends,

Welcome to MPC’s 2023 Annual Report!

As we embark on this journey of reflection and progress, we invite you to join us in celebrating the strides we’ve made toward a more equitable and just Chicago region. In the pages that follow, you’ll discover the impact of our collective efforts, grounded in the principles of equity and justice, as we work tirelessly to build a brighter future for all Chicago area residents.

MPC Further Embraces Equity and Justice

In 2023, MPC embarked on a transformative brand-building journey, culminating in the adoption of our new tagline: “Building Equity in the Built Environment.” We’re excited about this enhancement to our brand identity as it underscores our unwavering commitment to promoting equity and justice in every aspect of our work.

A Year of Resilience and Progress

Throughout the past year, MPC remained steadfast in our commitment to addressing major issues affecting our region. From the urgent need for affordable housing to sustainable transportation solutions, safe drinking water access, and equitable citywide policies and planning, each initiative undertaken by MPC falls within one of our three overarching pillars: Thriving Communities, Equitable Infrastructure, and Just Public Systems.

MPC’s Three Core Pillars at Work

Our initiatives within the Thriving Communities pillar are dedicated to breaking down systemic barriers and fostering equity. From spearheading efforts to revitalize Chicago’s waterway system to addressing the persistent homeownership gap among Black and Latinx communities, our collaborative endeavors aim to create vibrant and inclusive communities where every individual can flourish. By amplifying community voices and advocating for equitable policies, we’re working toward building a future where everyone has access to the opportunities and resources they need to thrive.

Our commitment to Equitable Infrastructure is evident in our efforts to advance transit resilience, drive equitable transit-oriented development, and accelerate improvements to bus service region-wide. By advocating for inclusive policies and pioneering innovative solutions, we are striving to create a transportation system and infrastructure that serves all residents equitably. Through collaboration and advocacy, we are working to ensure that infrastructure investments benefit underserved communities and promote economic opportunity for all.

In our pursuit of Just Public Systems, we are reimagining zoning for an equitable Chicago, crafting a collective vision for the future of the city, and addressing the historic harms of transportation infrastructure. Through community-led solutions and initiatives aimed at institutionalizing equity in local government, we’re driving transformative change. By challenging inequitable policies and advocating for inclusive governance structures, we are striving to create a more equitable and just society for all residents.

As we navigate the challenges and opportunities ahead, MPC remains dedicated to building a better future for all residents of our region. With your continued support, we’re confident that we can make meaningful progress toward our vision of a Chicago region where every community is valued, every person has a voice, and every neighborhood thrives.

Thank you for your unwavering support as we continue our journey toward a brighter and more equitable tomorrow.

With appreciation,

[Signature]

Paul C. Carlisle
MPC Chair
Board of Governors
Celebrating MPC’s 2023 Annual Event

The 2023 MPC Annual Event was a huge success. We brought together hundreds of corporate and civic leaders, elected officials, community partners, and special guests from across the Chicago region to help shape a more equitable future for everyone. We honored Quintin E. Primo III, founder and executive chairman of Capri Investment Group, with the MPC Champions of Change Award and Tonika Lewis Johnson, photographer, and social justice artist, with MPC’s Community Impact Award.

(PICTURED L-R): MPC Champions of Change Award Honoree Quintin E. Primo III, MPC Community Impact Award Honoree Tonika Lewis Johnson, former MPC President & CEO Darlene Oliver Hightower, and MPC Board Chair Paul Carlisle.
THRIVING COMMUNITIES

MPC VISION:
All communities have the resources needed to thrive, including accessible and affordable housing, healthy and resilient neighborhoods, and community centered planning and engagement.

MPC convened 35 steering committee members and 3 focus groups to help build the Chicago Department of Housing’s 5 year strategic agenda

Shaping the next five years of Chicago’s housing future

MPC is proud to be a lead advisor to the Chicago Department of Housing in crafting its 2024-2028 Five-Year Housing Plan. This strategic roadmap not only shapes the city’s housing agenda but also serves as a transparent reporting tool to the Chicago City Council. With a focus on enhancing access to safe and affordable housing, in 2023, MPC supported Chicago’s Department of Housing (DOH) to develop a comprehensive plan aligned with the Department’s core principles and existing frameworks. From steering committee selection and facilitation to guiding recommendations through the review process, MPC’s partnership ensures a robust and inclusive planning process that addresses the diverse needs and aspirations of Chicago’s residents and communities.
Collaborating in conversations to close the homeownership gap

Homeownership is one of the most important vehicles for building household wealth, creating a pathway for families to increase their economic security, and passing down generational wealth. However, a gap persists between Black, Latinx, and white households. In 2023, through a partnership with The Chicago Community Trust, MPC facilitated three roundtable conversations to address the systemic obstacles faced by Black and Latinx communities in achieving homeownership. Through this series, we delved into the historical roots of the homeownership gap, dissected current challenges, and explored cross-sectoral solutions. Our collaborative efforts stimulated transformative conversations aimed at inspiring actionable change. Together, we’re building awareness, fostering collaboration, and empowering stakeholders to disrupt systemic barriers and institutionalize equity in housing initiatives across the Chicago region.

“By bringing together a diverse group of people from different sectors, experiences, and different levels of understanding about the homeownership gap, along with housing organizations and community stakeholders, we really felt like this particular conversation series could bring greater awareness to this issue.”
– Shandra Richardson, Program Director for Strategic Initiatives, The Chicago Community Trust

Reflecting on our progress towards our equitable future

In 2017, MPC released The Cost of Segregation, a landmark study quantifying the impacts that decades of racist policies and practices have had on our region’s people and built environment. From this, Our Equitable Future emerged—a comprehensive agenda for equitable policy progress. In 2023, after five years, MPC reflected on the progress made and the challenges ahead amidst the COVID-19 pandemic and renewed racial justice focus. Through stakeholder engagement and in-depth analysis, we’ve tracked the implementation of Our Equitable Future recommendations and identified key themes shaping our journey toward equity. From the integration of equity across sectors to the imperative for action over rhetoric, our findings underscore the need for collaborative, transformative efforts. MPC partnered with the Mayor’s Office of Equity and Racial Justice to host an event in 2023 that highlighted findings from the Our Equitable Future retrospective alongside the city’s 2024 Equity Report. As we move forward, it’s clear that achieving equity requires a regional approach, transcending jurisdictional boundaries and fostering shared accountability.

MPC has done critically important work in naming the tangible costs of racial inequality and has remained committed to tracking the ebbs and flow of progress. This is a valuable resource for policymakers, advocates, and community organizers, especially at a time where change is so dynamic in our city, region, and nation.
– Candace Moore, former Chief Equity Officer of Chicago and Senior Strategic Advisor, Race Forward

8 of the 25 recommendations in MPC’s Our Equitable Future report have seen movement toward adoption or have been implemented
Realizing the potential of our great rivers

Since 2016, MPC has been a driving force behind the realization of the Our Great Rivers vision, fostering collaboration among civic, community, and government partners to revitalize Chicago’s waterway system. As co-convener of the River Ecology and Governance Task Force with the City of Chicago’s Department of Planning and Development and Friends of the Chicago River, MPC facilitates collective action toward a thriving and ecologically integrated river network. In 2023, the US Army Corps of Engineers released the Chicago Waterways Restoration Framework Plan, a significant milestone that encapsulates the work that the Task Force has been doing to illustrate existing conditions and highlight opportunity sites for environmental restoration, public access, and recreation. Other notable outcomes include the completion of the Chicago Department of Transportation’s South Branch Parks Access Study and the initiation of the River Edge Access Study. Together, we’re navigating toward a future where Chicago’s rivers serve as vibrant natural assets to be enjoyed by all.

“The River Ecology and Governance Task Force has provided a valuable opportunity to connect the work of City of Chicago agencies and departments to river experts, scientists, advocates, and river edge community residents. Collaboration through the Task Force has allowed for a broader conversation about emerging and future river policies, and has improved the efficiency of communications and input gathering for City river plans, projects, and regulatory updates.”

– Adam Flickinger, Planning Director, Friends of the Chicago River

MPC supported the 8 projects that were funded through the Our Great Rivers grant this year

Cyclist rides on the Halsted Riverwalk along a portion of the Calumet River, with Urban Rivers’ floating island in the foreground.

Credit: McKinley Park Development Council
Advancing transit resilience to turn challenges into opportunities

As our region faces a critical juncture in transit funding, MPC is mobilizing stakeholders to turn adversity into opportunity. With the COVID-19 federal relief aid set to expire in 2025, the need to secure operations funding for our regional transit system is paramount. Emphasizing the pivotal role of transit in economic growth, climate resilience, and equitable access to opportunity, MPC led a dynamic working group focused on engaging policymakers and stakeholders in constructive dialogue about the future of transit. Through educational initiatives and strategic outreach, we’re laying the groundwork for sustainable transit solutions and transformative legislative action. Additionally, MPC has played a lead role in conducting research and advocacy on greenhouse gas emission targets for transportation, ensuring our transportation investments align with ambitious environmental goals. Together, we’re charting a course towards building a more resilient and inclusive transportation system for generations to come.

“’This is the moment where we can really seriously talk about changing transit and changing the way it’s structured, and really look at the big picture. My hope is that ten years from now, our transit system looks very different. We must reimagine our system. It needs to be a first choice for people.”

– Illinois District 3 Representative Eva-Dina Delgado

Plan of Action for Regional Transit report
Driving Equitable Transit-Oriented Development (ETOD) forward

We all deserve the opportunity to live in walkable, vibrant communities with affordable housing and efficient transit. Driven by this vision, MPC co-leads and convenes the Elevated Chicago Systems Change Working Group. Together, we’re igniting a movement to advance ETOD policy throughout the region that revitalizes communities, bridges disparities, and champions inclusivity. In 2023, MPC briefed Chicago City Council members on ETOD initiatives, including the groundbreaking Connected Communities Ordinance. Through educational webinars for new alderpeople and strategic meetings with key city officials, MPC highlighted the need to sustain resources for ETOD under the new administration. With the appointment of MPC’s former board member, Ciere Boatright, as the Chicago Department of Planning and Development commissioner, our impact resonates even further. As we chart our course in 2024, MPC remains steadfast in our dedication to driving equitable development policies and creating a city where every community can thrive.

Evaluating equity in transit-oriented development

The passage of the sweeping Connected Communities Ordinance in 2022 marked a significant step forward in promoting equitable transit-oriented development in Chicago. However, an ordinance is only valuable with effective enforcement. To address this, MPC, in partnership with the Elevated Chicago ETOD Working Group, has led the co-creation of a comprehensive ETOD scorecard tool in 2023. This tool, developed with input from community stakeholders, will empower decision-makers to assess developments based on shared established equity metrics. Development of the scorecard remains ongoing, with the City of Chicago reaffirming its commitment to pilot the prototype.
Accelerating improvements to bus service regionwide

Hop on board for an opportunity to build out Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) in Greater Chicago. With rail-like speed and convenience at a fraction of the cost of installing rail, BRT has the potential to revolutionize the transportation landscape. Throughout 2023, MPC fostered understanding and engagement on bus priority infrastructure and BRT by facilitating community discussions held across Chicago as part of the Chicago Department of Transportation’s Chicago Mobility Collaborative. MPC also advocated for investments in Pace Pulse service regionwide and led educational sessions and discussions on bus improvements with Transportation Equity Network members. Together, we’re working to accelerate a more inclusive and efficient transit system for the region.

“MPC’s support helps to create a baseline understanding of bus priority and bus rapid transit and their benefits among diverse attendees, and draw out their thoughts about where and how to pursue bus improvements.”
— Jen Henry, Director of Strategic Planning and Policy, CTA

Advising on equitable funding for lead service line replacement (LSLR)

No Illinois resident should have to drink water from lead-contaminated pipes. Despite landmark legislation passed by the Illinois General Assembly in 2021 mandating lead service line replacement, ensuring equitable implementation remains a challenge. MPC’s focus on equitable lead service line replacement aims to address systemic inequities in water infrastructure. Black and Latinx Illinoisans are twice as likely as white Illinoisans to live in the communities that contain almost all the state’s lead service lines, underscoring the urgent need for equitable funding distribution. In 2023, a pivotal highlight of our work included advising the Illinois EPA on the equitable distribution of federal lead service line replacement funding, resulting in the adoption of rules that reflect MPC’s recommendations. This achievement underscores our commitment to driving policy changes and improving practices in water management, as we strive to build equity in Illinois' built environment.
Pioneering innovative solutions to stormwater management challenges

StormStore heralds a new era in stormwater management for Cook County. Spearheaded by MPC in partnership with The Nature Conservancy, StormStore pioneers a market-based approach to enhance stormwater infrastructure where it’s most needed. Currently in its pilot phase for the Little Calumet and Lower Des Plaines watersheds, StormStore promises equitable solutions for the Chicago region’s stormwater challenges. Throughout 2023, notable progress included pre-trade activity with private developers and the pilot expansion proposal by the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago. Additionally, MPC has initiated research projects to underscore the equity benefits of stormwater trading, influencing policy and strategic initiatives. Engaging with government officials and NGOs, MPC is driving forward coordination efforts for green infrastructure solutions and a vision of resilient, sustainable stormwater management for our region.

Examining the nuanced experience of Latinx residents in the suburbs

As the Latinx population burgeons in the suburbs, MPC, in collaboration with the Latino Policy Forum and the University of Illinois at Chicago’s Great Cities Institute, delves into their multifaceted experiences in the report, Latinos in the Suburbs: Challenges and Opportunities. Released in 2023, the comprehensive report examines the Latinx population’s opportunities, challenges, and socioeconomic dynamics compared to their non-Latinx counterparts. Our findings underscore the nuanced narrative of their growth and the paradoxical tensions they encounter. While contributing significantly to the region’s socioeconomic fabric, Latinx residents still face disparities in income and employment. The data in this report show that the socioeconomic well-being of Latinx residents in the suburbs has improved between 2010 and 2020, but it also dramatically highlights that the socioeconomic vitality contributed by the Latinx community has yet to be fully reflected in the lives of many Latinx residents. The report demonstrates the need for targeted interventions to ensure equitable opportunities for the Latinx population in suburban communities.
Nurturing equitable development in Black and Latinx communities

We Rise Together: For an Equitable & Just Recovery, a funders collaborative hosted by The Chicago Community Trust, works with community members to address the pressing economic needs of Black and Latinx communities. In 2023, MPC provided vital technical support to We Rise grantees embarking on capital projects as they navigated the complex development process. Through user-centric journey mapping, MPC identified systemic barriers, particularly within the building permit process, amplifying insights with qualitative data from the concurrent Zoning and Land Use Assessment (see p. 12). The result is a comprehensive identification of pain points in the system and their impact on development overall. Presenting findings to the Deputy Mayor of Business & Economic and Neighborhood Development, MPC’s work set the stage for the city’s development process improvement initiative for 2024. With ongoing collaboration and data-driven interventions, MPC seeks to support implementation of the recommendations that the city will prioritize to improve the development process and promote equitable opportunities for underinvested communities.

“Partnering with MPC as a We Rise Together grantee has been instrumental in navigating the intricate administrative landscape of our project. From facilitating communication with municipalities to serving as a liaison for essential connections, MPC’s support has been invaluable. They anticipated and addressed small yet tedious challenges that would have otherwise slowed our progress, demonstrating a deep commitment to our project’s success.”

– Cecelia Harrison, CEO, ReveNewCycle Management and Consulting

MPC convened 2 workshops with We Rise Together project leads to help shape a business permitting journey map
Reimagining zoning for an equitable Chicago

Zoning is not just about buildings—it shapes where we live and what we do. In Chicago, like elsewhere, zoning has historically been entangled with issues of race, income, and equity. MPC and Urban Institute are leading a groundbreaking effort to assess the impacts of zoning on public health, equity, and sustainability in Chicago. Through collaborative research and stakeholder engagement, MPC is working to understand the influence of zoning on neighborhood outcomes. In 2023, Phase 1 saw the co-creation of an assessment approach with a Steering Committee of civic and community-based organizations, government, private sector, and academic partners. In Phase II, MPC has begun its citywide assessment while deepening outreach efforts. This initiative assesses how zoning contributes to disparities across neighborhoods and develops recommendations for more equitable planning and development practices with the goal of reimagining zoning so everyone can thrive.
Advancing a collective vision for the future of the city

We Will Chicago marks a historic milestone in the city’s planning legacy, serving as the first citywide plan since the 1960s. Shaped by robust community engagement, it reflects a unified vision for a more equitable and inclusive Chicago. With its adoption by the Plan Commission in 2023, the City must update its citywide plan every 10 years and requires planned developments to be aligned with the plan’s guiding principles and objectives. Led by the City’s Department of Planning and Development, We Will Chicago establishes a framework for future growth and development while prioritizing community voices. MPC played a pivotal role throughout the plan’s creation and offered testimony in support of its passage at Plan Commission. Recognized with the prestigious 2023 Burnham Award for a Comprehensive Plan by the Illinois Chapter of the American Planning Association, We Will Chicago stands as a testament to collective vision and commitment to shaping a brighter future for all Chicagoans.

Decades of highway and freight rail development have left scars on Chicago’s neighborhoods, displacing residents and perpetuating environmental injustice. In 2023, MPC released our Reconnecting Communities report at a webinar event featuring the City of Chicago’s Office of Equity and Racial Justice, Austin Coming Together, and Congress for the New Urbanism. Through Reconnecting Communities, MPC delves into the human toll of historic transportation infrastructure, engaging residents in crafting solutions rooted in their lived experiences. Our collaborative efforts with the City of Chicago have identified crucial projects along the I-290 corridor on the West Side, all aimed at addressing disparities outlined in our report. The City of Chicago was awarded a $2 million grant to improve community safety, cohesion, and quality of life through enhanced connectivity over and around this interstate highway. We’ve also been actively engaging with the Coalition for a Better Chinese American Community (CBCAC) to transform viaduct areas under freight railroad infrastructure in Chinatown. With pro bono support from Design Trust Chicago, we worked with CBCAC to turn a community-led vision into design concepts, laying the groundwork for a more connected Chinatown community.
Institutionalizing equity in local government

In a city where structural inequities have stubbornly persisted, MPC’s Change Teams initiative stands as a beacon of transformative change. Through Change Teams, MPC equips government partners with the tools and skills needed to address systemic barriers and institutionalize equity. Monthly workshops empower participants to design and implement policy, process, and cultural shifts, while train-the-trainer sessions ensure sustainable leadership. Working closely with Chicago’s Department of Housing (DOH), MPC guides the development of equity-centered housing solutions. In 2023, MPC worked with the DOH Home Repair team to streamline the intake process for home improvement programs and create a regular cadence of program review, enhancing operational efficiency and impact. This collaborative effort culminated in a final presentation hosted by MPC and DOH’s Office of Community Engagement, Racial Equity and Strategic Initiatives (CERESI) team where DOH’s Home Repair, Policy, and Construction and Compliance teams presented their progress and next steps.

“The program, I reflected on questions like ‘Do we define equity in terms of outcomes or in terms of how we do business? Are we doing one at the cost of another?’ Change Teams can create infrastructure to monitor performance and improve how the city functions.”

– Matthew Schmitz, Managing Deputy Budget Director, City of Chicago.

MPC hosted 20+ Change Team gatherings and introduced a train-the-trainer model to amplify the impact of its Change Teams work.
Empowering municipal leaders in water management best practices

In the complex landscape of water resource management, informed decision-making is paramount. Elected officials often enter office without prior experience in water resource management or running a water utility. In 2023, MPC’s Drinking Water 1-2-3 Academy provided a vital platform for equipping local government officials with the knowledge and tools needed to navigate challenges in effectively managing our region’s water resources. By integrating industry best practices and drawing from local context, our Academy empowers officials to prioritize water affordability and infrastructure maintenance, ultimately ensuring equitable access to clean drinking water for all communities. Our advocacy efforts, including engagement with state and national agencies, further reinforce our commitment to enhancing technical assistance programs and securing funding opportunities for municipalities across Illinois.

“Arcadis is committed to improving water quality and the quality of life for others. Supporting MPC’s water-related community initiative aligns with our core values and expertise in water infrastructure and environmental solutions. We believe in creating resilient and vibrant communities, and investing in water projects is essential for a sustainable future.”

– LeeAnn Tomas-Foster, Chicago City Executive, Arcadis
Financial Summary

MPC is able to advance its mission of creating a more equitable and sustainable Chicago region thanks to the generous contributions of individuals, corporations, foundations, and government. By directly funding MPC’s work, these valued partners enable us to focus on ensuring that everyone in the region has access to the resources and opportunities they need to thrive.

Operating Expenses by Category

- **85%** Programs
- **12%** Fundraising
- **2%** Management and General
- **1%** In-Kind

Operating Revenue by Source

- **70%** Foundation
- **24%** Corporate
- **4%** Individuals
- **2%** Government
Donors

We are deeply grateful for the valued contributions we received throughout the year from our many supporters. These contributions have made a meaningful difference as they have enabled us to continue our work toward creating a more equitable and just Chicago region.

$500,000 and above
The Chicago Community Trust

$250,000 - $499,999
The Joyce Foundation

$100,000 - $249,999
City of Chicago, Department of Housing
Crown Family Philanthropies
Energy Foundation
Grand Victoria Foundation
The John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation
McDougal Family Foundation
Robert R. McCormick Foundation

$50,000 - $99,999
BMO
Bowman Lingle Foundation
Capri Investment Group
Equitable Transportation Fund
Gaylord and Dorothy Donnelley Foundation
Harris Family Foundation
Polk Bros. Foundation
Square One Foundation
U.S. Bank
Wintrust Financial Corporation

$20,000 - $49,999
Abbott
Bank of America
Carnahan Family Foundation
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$5,000 - $9,999
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Indiana, Illinois, Iowa Foundation for Fair Contracting
Jerome S. and Grace H. Murray Foundation
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$1,000 - $4,999
Adam Shafer Barney Memorial Fund at The Chicago Community Foundation
Anonymous
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Kyle Barnett
Carol Ross Barney
Prudence R. Beidler
BIG Construction
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Nedra Sims Fears
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