

Metropolitan Planning Council

2025 ANNUAL REPORT

Letter from the President & CEO



With your support and partnership, Metropolitan Planning Council (MPC) made incredible progress in 2025 defining and confronting some of Chicago's most complex challenges in measurable, actionable ways and shaping a vision for the future of our region. Together we are building what we've always known was possible—a truly connected region with shared prosperity.

Across policy domains, geographies, and ideological divides, over the last year MPC worked to strengthen our economy, our ecosystems, and our quality of life. We reduced structural barriers to homeownership lending and capital access. We played a leading role in the passage of the Northern Illinois Transportation Authority (NITA) Act to give Illinois' transit systems and our economy, which depend on them, a real platform to grow. We charted new approaches to improving public understanding of zoning and how land use actually works in Chicago, and strengthened the complex but critical governance and planning systems that manage and shape public water infrastructure. We identified strategies for accelerating lead pipe replacement in ways that can both grow jobs and remove poisonous infrastructure more quickly and effectively, and we crafted innovative climate modeling projections so government officials can navigate the impacts of climate change in our region with newly precise tools.

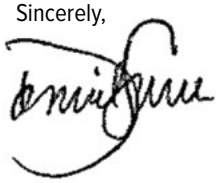
Each MPC convening, program, partnership, and policy moved the needle in systemic, enduring ways—bringing us closer to our goal of making the city and suburbs we love a place where everyone can raise a family, get and hold a good job, live where they want, and grow old with dignity and security. As it has for generations now, to accomplish this MPC will continue to confront and grapple with race, class, and gender as fundamental governing systems that play out at every scale—individual, family, neighborhood, city, region, and state—and can foster and enable greater shared prosperity, or, in some cases, thwart it.

In 2025, government and private stakeholders continued to turn to us as a trusted partner, counting on MPC to lead without political affiliation or obligation, go where the evidence—be it ours or others—takes us, and put solutions into action. In the year ahead, we will continue this work, creating and enacting policies that make it easier for people to thrive in this region, starting with the middle class.

Chicago has, at times, looked the other way on difficult problems. At MPC, we promise to leverage our independence, our Chicago and suburban roots, and our statewide and national reach to "call the questions" that evidence and good policy demand, and help our great city answer with innovation, open-mindness, and dynamism.

We are honored to do this work. We couldn't do without you. With your partnership, we will make our city and our suburbs a place where we start to define a new Chicago dream, where the good life is possible for everyone.

Sincerely,



Dan Lurie
President & CEO
Metropolitan Planning Council

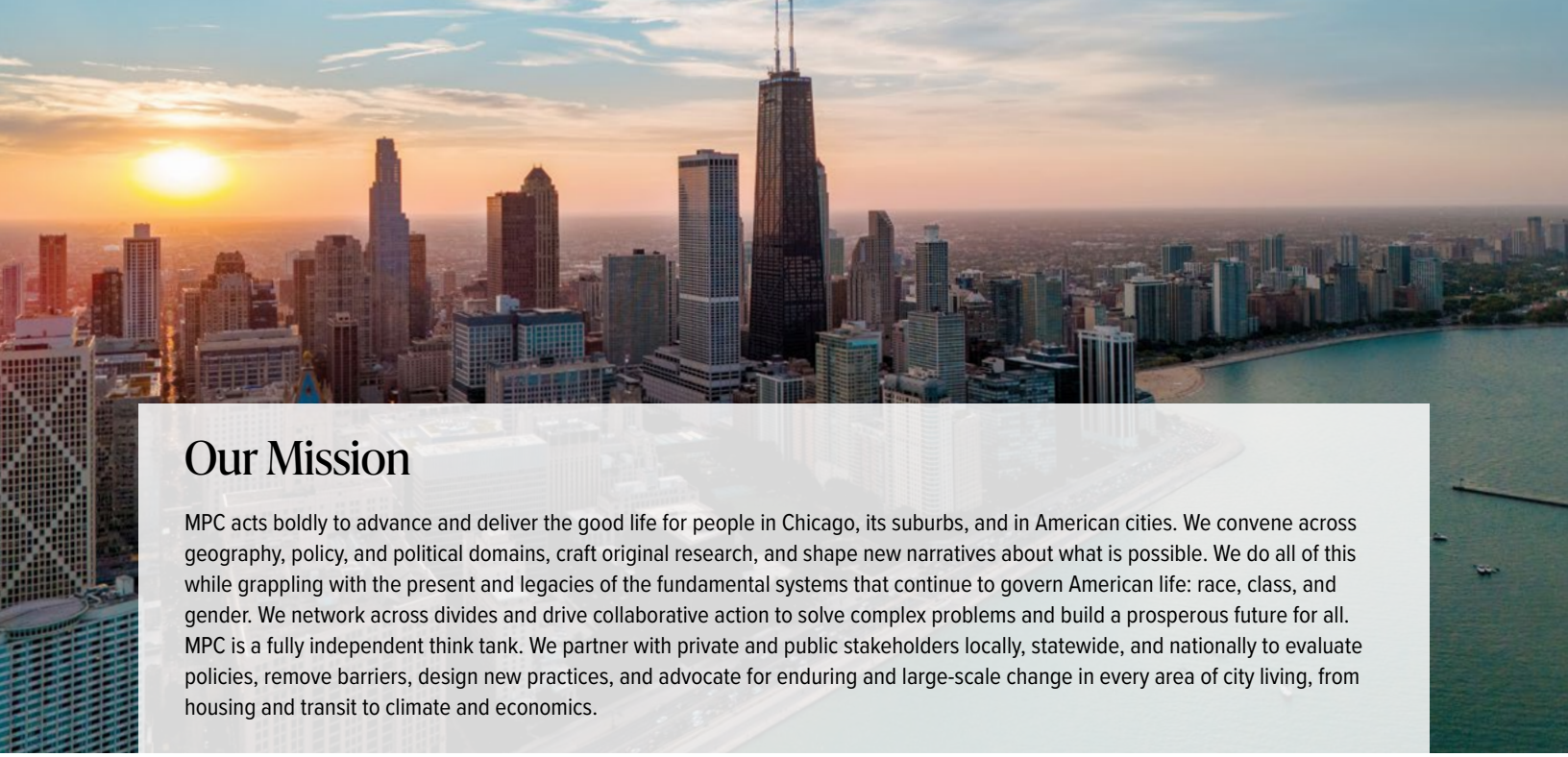
Table of Contents

MPC MISSION AND IMPACT 1

PROGRAMS

- Housing 2
- Transit 4
- Zoning 6
- Water 7
- Infrastructure 8

Events 10
Financials 13
Donors 14
Leadership 15



Our Mission

MPC acts boldly to advance and deliver the good life for people in Chicago, its suburbs, and in American cities. We convene across geography, policy, and political domains, craft original research, and shape new narratives about what is possible. We do all of this while grappling with the present and legacies of the fundamental systems that continue to govern American life: race, class, and gender. We network across divides and drive collaborative action to solve complex problems and build a prosperous future for all. MPC is a fully independent think tank. We partner with private and public stakeholders locally, statewide, and nationally to evaluate policies, remove barriers, design new practices, and advocate for enduring and large-scale change in every area of city living, from housing and transit to climate and economics.

Our Impact

MPC navigates complicated terrain to create the real, usable solutions that our city needs—not trickle-down ideas, but visionary and holistic plans to restore the Chicago dream. In 2025, we invested in work that accelerates and facilitates change, making our region a more affordable place to live, work, and grow.

We created conditions for change in the housing crisis.

MPC focused on understanding why the region is not producing enough affordable homes for working families and what can be done about it. We invested in research of local housing markets, documented barriers to new housing, convened partners to form coalitions, and advanced practical policy solutions. From statewide housing typologies to homeownership initiatives, zoning reform, and the Housing Policy Roundtable, we built knowledge, coalitions, and momentum to expand housing opportunity across the state.

We built partnerships for transformative transit reform.

Years of coalition building, public education, technical expertise, and legislative advocacy culminated in the historic passage of the Northern Illinois Transit Authority (NITA) Act. NITA marks a defining moment for our region—the establishment of a stronger governance framework and new opportunities to create a more reliable, coordinated transit system. With successful implementation and sustained collaboration, NITA can deliver connected service for the millions of people who depend on regional transit each day.

We advanced innovative big-picture thinking.

Throughout 2025, MPC brought government and organizations to the same table to shape solutions that strengthen our entire region. Thinking and acting beyond hyper-local borders, MPC led conversation and strategy across a myriad of program areas—through research, technical expertise, and collaboration with community voices and public leadership. From citywide zoning and land use research, to regional water planning and green infrastructure strategies, our efforts prioritized coordinated action across jurisdictions, disciplines, and sectors.

Housing

Building a Fairer Development System

THE PROGRAM: CUT THE TAPE

OPPORTUNITY:

Chicago's development system shapes which neighborhoods thrive and businesses grow, and who can access housing opportunities. While Chicagoans do their best within existing frameworks, most aren't able to get a fair start on their plans for the future. Priced out of home ownership, they struggle to save to buy a home, or they travel great distances for job opportunities.

ACTION

Through capacity-building and technical assistance, MPC identified processes that create hurdles for developers, small businesses, and aspiring homeowners. Insights from practitioners, architects, business owners, and developers enabled us to contribute strategies for reshaping Chicago's development system and advancing equity in housing and small-business growth to Mayor Johnson's Cut the Tape initiative.

MPC surfaced actionable solutions to cultural challenges within City government, strengthening trust, communication, and collaboration. We also institutionalized Cut the Tape reforms through advocacy and accountability strategies to ensure that progress continues and results in a development system that is faster, fairer, and more equitable for Chicago's residents.

IMPACT



Fostering Consensus in Housing Policy

THE PROGRAM: HOUSING POLICY ROUNDTABLE

OPPORTUNITY:

For too many years, building new small and mid-sized homes has been banned in communities across the state—limiting the construction of affordable housing, reducing inventory, and inciting bidding wars that drive up prices. Now Illinois faces urgent challenges in housing affordability, stability, and supply. Efforts to address the crisis have been slowed by fragmented proposals and silos within the policy ecosystem.

ACTION

Recognizing these obstacles, MPC partnered with Impact for Equity (IFE) to launch the Housing Policy Roundtable, bringing together diverse stakeholders—advocates, researchers, community organizations, and policymakers—around a shared agenda. MPC contributed research and policy expertise, while IFE provided legal and fair housing guidance.

Fostering consensus among participants with historically divergent perspectives has bridged gaps between market actors, advocacy groups, and city leaders. The roundtable initiative is also building relationships with alderpeople and state leaders, some of whom have encouraged expansion of the model to city-level housing policymaking.

IMPACT



Transit

Securing a More Resilient Transit Future

THE PROGRAM: SUSTAINABLE TRANSIT CAMPAIGN

OPPORTUNITY:

Transit systems in Northeastern Illinois stood at a crossroads in 2025. Without action, looming budget shortfalls threatened deep service cuts that would disrupt commutes, slow economic growth, and undermine progress on climate and equity.

ACTION

To help lawmakers and stakeholders understand what a stronger regional transit system could deliver, MPC led a transit working group as part of the Illinois Clean Jobs Coalition (ICJC). We met weekly throughout the year with legislative champions, testified before the Senate Transportation Committee, and engaged the public through media, briefings, and educational forums. MPC developed story maps and service-cut analyses to demonstrate both the urgency of the fiscal cliff and the transformative benefits of investment.

IMPACT

MPC's efforts in collaboration with the ICJC culminated in the passage of the Northern Illinois Transit Authority Act (SB2111), signed into law by Governor J. B. Pritzker in December 2025. Effective June 1, 2026, the law creates the Northern Illinois Transit Authority, replaces the Regional Transportation Authority, reforms the governance of Chicago Transit Authority, Metra, and Pace, and establishes new funding sources to support more frequent, reliable service across Northeastern Illinois.



Partnering to Advance Equitable Transit-Oriented Development

THE PROGRAM: EQUITABLE TRANSIT-ORIENTED DEVELOPMENT (ETOD)

OPPORTUNITY:

The wealth gap in Chicago is large and growing. MPC recognized that Chicago needs tailored strategies to increase affordability where people live, so residents can build wealth and avoid displacement.

ACTION

MPC helped coordinate the city's only standing body focused exclusively on advancing long-term Equitable Transit-Oriented Development (ETOD) policy. The group brings together civic, advocacy, and community-based partners, identifies policy reforms, monitors emerging opportunities, and aligns communications to move solutions forward. MPC was honored to work alongside Elevated Chicago, Center for Neighborhood Technology, IFF, Rudd Resources, and DePaul Institute of Housing Studies on the "State of ETOD" report to assess progress and outline next steps.

IMPACT

In collaboration with the ETOD Policy Working Group, the Mayor's Office, and City departments, MPC advanced reforms that link land use, housing, and transit investment. This includes advocating for sustainable transit operations funding, zoning reforms that support density and walkability, and right-sized parking requirements in transit-served areas. The "State of ETOD" report serves as a foundational resource, ensuring that development near transit strengthens housing stability, climate resilience, and economic mobility for residents across Chicago.



Zoning

Increasing Transparency, Productivity, and Equity in Zoning

THE PROGRAM: ZONING AND LAND USE RECOMMENDATIONS

OPPORTUNITY:

When zoning works well, it supports thriving, resilient communities—setting aside space for parks, homes, shopping, manufacturing and offices. At its best, zoning paves the way for people of all ages to reliably have what they need nearby—transit, food, water, culture, schools, and retail. However, zoning has also been used as a tool to artificially limit the types of homes and businesses allowed in affluent communities—and push harmful businesses and land uses into communities of color. Over time, this practice has reinforced the racial, ethnic, and economic segregation we see in our region and resulted in inequitable outcomes and lost economic productivity.

ACTION

Leveraging the findings from our Citywide Zoning and Land Use Assessment, MPC moved into action, advancing reforms to make Chicago's land-use system more transparent, productive, and equitable. MPC also released a zine entitled "In the Zone: A Chicagoan's Guide to Zoning and Land Use"—a tool that positions zoning as a powerful lever for community-led growth. In 2026, MPC will host free, public workshops guided by "In the Zone" to encourage residents to participate in the development process.

"In the Zone" has been distributed widely in Chicago and through participating library branches. Published in English, Spanish, and simplified Chinese, "In the Zone" is helping Chicago residents understand and shape the policies that define their neighborhoods. MPC also partnered with the Small Business Advisory Council to advance proposals that would shift select special uses to a by-right process, reducing unnecessary barriers for neighborhood-serving businesses.

IMPACT





Waterfront Land Use

Strengthening Waterway Governance and Planning

THE PROGRAM: OUR GREAT RIVERS AND RIVERS TASK FORCE

OPPORTUNITY:

The success of Chicago's rivers—as inviting, productive, and living ecosystems—depends on the strength of waterway planning and governance. MPC is committed to advancing the vision for Chicago's rivers as flourishing, ecologically integrated community assets.

ACTION

MPC co-facilitated the River Ecology and Governance Task Force, alongside Friends of the Chicago River, focusing on strengthening governance and planning for the city's waterways. Building on prior work, the Task Force launched a River Assets Working Group to address fragmented governance and advance priorities for a comprehensive River Corridor Action Plan.

The action plan will guide land use decisions along the river system, supporting ecological integrity and community needs, while also exploring best practices in long-term stewardship, maintenance, and clear communication among stakeholders. With solid governance in place, MPC thoughtfully transitioned out of its co-managing role with the River Ecology and Governance Task Force, with Friends of the Chicago River stepping into expanded leadership.

IMPACT

Infrastructure

Guiding Green Infrastructure for Maximum Community Benefit

THE PROGRAM: RIGHT INFRASTRUCTURE, RIGHT PLACE

OPPORTUNITY:

Infrastructure decisions shape community resilience for generations. Advances in data analysis and technology are changing the game, enabling public agencies to place green infrastructure where it will provide the greatest community benefit—complementing and strengthening local and regional responses to climate change.

ACTION

Building on the launch of Right Infrastructure, Right Place in 2024, MPC advanced a data-driven approach to stormwater investment across Chicago and Cook County. We completed a national scan of climate and socioeconomic indicators used by governments to guide stormwater investments, and partnered with community organizations Blacks in Green and Emerald South Collaborative to develop case studies highlighting how strategic green stormwater infrastructure (GSI) investments can deliver tangible benefits for residents.

Working with the Discovery Partners Institute, we created neighborhood-scale climate modeling projections for 2050, 2070, and 2100, bringing new precision to how climate risk can inform infrastructure decisions. We also helped public agencies prioritize green stormwater infrastructure where it can most effectively reduce flooding, heat stress, and long-term climate risk.

IMPACT



Supported Key Programs

HOUSING TYPOLOGY

Illinois faces a critical shortage of affordable, high-quality homes. MPC launched "Evidence to Action: Understanding and Addressing Housing Supply Challenges in Illinois" to provide a data-driven understanding of regional differences and inform more targeted policy solutions, and developed the state's first comprehensive housing market typology and barrier analysis in partnership with the Institute for Housing Studies at DePaul University.

HOMEOWNERSHIP LENDING

It's become increasingly unaffordable to purchase a home in Chicago. Through a partnership with The Chicago Community Trust, MPC addressed structural barriers in homeownership lending and capital access for families historically excluded from the market, and launched monthly office hours with CDFI leaders to provide real-time problem-solving and accelerate product development.

PRIVATELY OWNED VACANT LAND

Vacant lots in Chicago provide opportunity for the construction of small-scale developments that our city needs. MPC launched an initiative to analyze privately owned vacant land and surface community-informed strategies for productive reuse, in partnership with the Institute for Housing Studies at DePaul University.

FAMILY-FRIENDLY HOUSING RESEARCH

Complex development processes and fragmented regulations create persistent barriers to homeownership. MPC created the Family-Friendly Housing Research program to confront this challenge and identify practical solutions for expanding the supply of homes that meet real family needs.

LEAD SERVICE LINE REPLACEMENT

Replacing lead service lines in Illinois remains one of the most significant opportunities to protect public health. MPC completed and released its collaborative research project focused on the challenges facing lead service line replacement in a manner that creates jobs, builds wealth, and provides opportunities for communities most affected.

STATE OF WATER

Ensuring access to clean, safe and sustainable drinking water—a central priority for Illinois communities—requires a long-term view. MPC advanced this mission through Vision for Water convenings, workshops, and cross-sector roundtables, and facilitated the Lake Michigan Leadership Dialogues, bringing together more than 25 municipal, regional, and state institutions.



Events

In 2025, MPC hosted and participated in a variety of events that brought together leaders, partners, and community members to advance ideas and action for a stronger Chicago region. From thought-provoking conversations to collaborative gatherings, these events created opportunities to share knowledge, build connections, and explore the bold ideas that can shape our future.

SAVING PUBLIC TRANSIT IN CHICAGOLAND

MPC hosted the Saving Public Transit in Chicagoland webinar in January 2025 to explore the state of public transit in Northeast Illinois, the upcoming funding cliff, potential impacts on service, and solutions for fixing the system. MPC's Audrey Wennink, State Sen. Ram Villivalam, and Kevin Brubaker of the Environmental Law and Policy Center discussed how to build a robust, safe, reliable transit system in our region.



Panelists are shown in promotional image for the event:
(L-R: Sen. Ram Villivalam, Audrey Wennink, and Kevin Brubaker).

CUMULATIVE IMPACTS ORDINANCE

The Hazel Johnson Cumulative Impacts Ordinance was introduced in the Chicago City Council by Mayor Brandon Johnson in April 2025. The passage acknowledged years of hard work by environmental justice advocates and community, civic, and government partners to address practices that place the burden of pollution on Black and Brown communities. Supporters gathered in front of City Hall for the announcement.

Below: Advocates gather in front of Chicago City Hall in April 2025 for the announcement of the Hazel Johnson Cumulative Impacts Ordinance.







Graphic recorder and illustrator Cori Nakamura Lin brought the panel discussion to life with her visual notetaking presented live onscreen behind the panelists.

IN THE ZONE

"IN THE ZONE" ZINE LAUNCH

MPC released "In the Zone: A Chicagoan's Guide to Zoning and Land Use" in August 2025 at the Chicago Architecture Center with a panel discussion on the ways that art and creativity impact civic life and engagement in Chicago. The guide makes one of Chicago's most complex systems more accessible and transparent for residents, breaking down zoning into plain language and using graphics and storytelling, so that information is approachable. "In the Zone" is available in English, Spanish, and simplified Chinese.



Moderator Ella McCann (The Executives' Club of Chicago and EllaMarieTV) (far left), in conversation with panelists Lucie Van der Elst (zine illustrator and multidisciplinary artist), Carlos Robles-Shanahan (Duo Development), Angela Esposito (Chicago Architecture Center), and Tonika Johnson (Folded Map Project and R.A.G.E.).

Lighting a Path Forward

2025 MPC ANNUAL EVENT

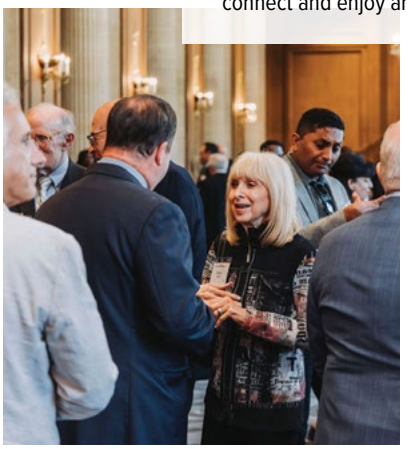
MPC welcomed guests to Chicago's Hilton Grand Ballroom in September 2025 for Lighting a Path Forward, an event focused on challenges and opportunities facing our region and practical solutions. Civic leaders, policymakers, business representatives, sponsors, and community partners discussed how the Chicago region can grow more equitably and sustainably, and the importance of growth that benefits everyone.







Local leaders and MPC stakeholders connect and enjoy an engaging evening.









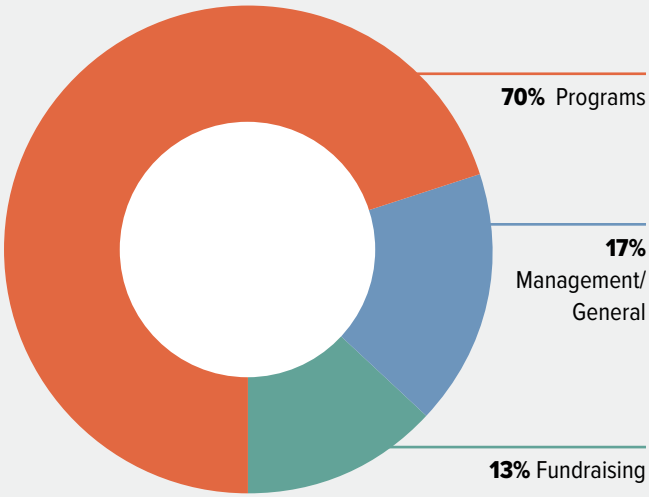
At left: Champions of Change Honoree, Christy George.

Below, Chris Hayes moderates a fireside chat with keynote speaker Ai-jen Poo

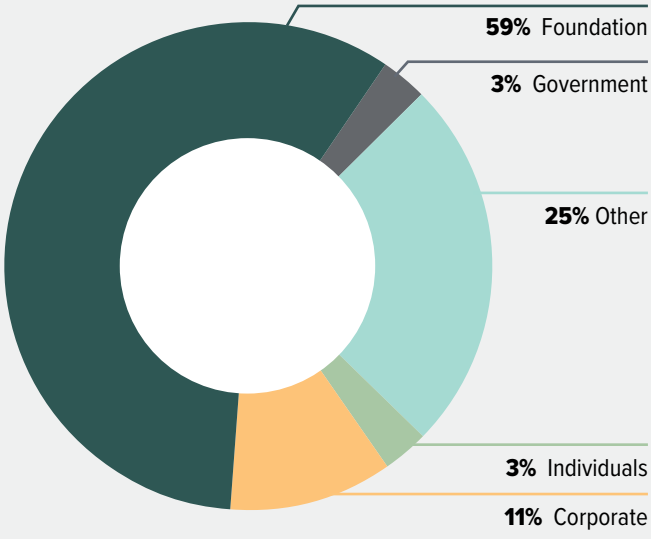
At left (L-R): MPC board chair Manny Flores, keynote speaker Ai-jen Poo, special guest moderator Chris Hayes, and MPC President & CEO Dan Lurie

Financials

FY'25 OPERATING EXPENSES BY SOURCE



FY'25 OPERATING REVENUE BY SOURCE



Donors

MPC is deeply grateful for the contributions received this year from its supporters. Thank you for investing in our work. Your generosity is building a Chicago a region where systems work, people thrive, and bold ideas become reality.

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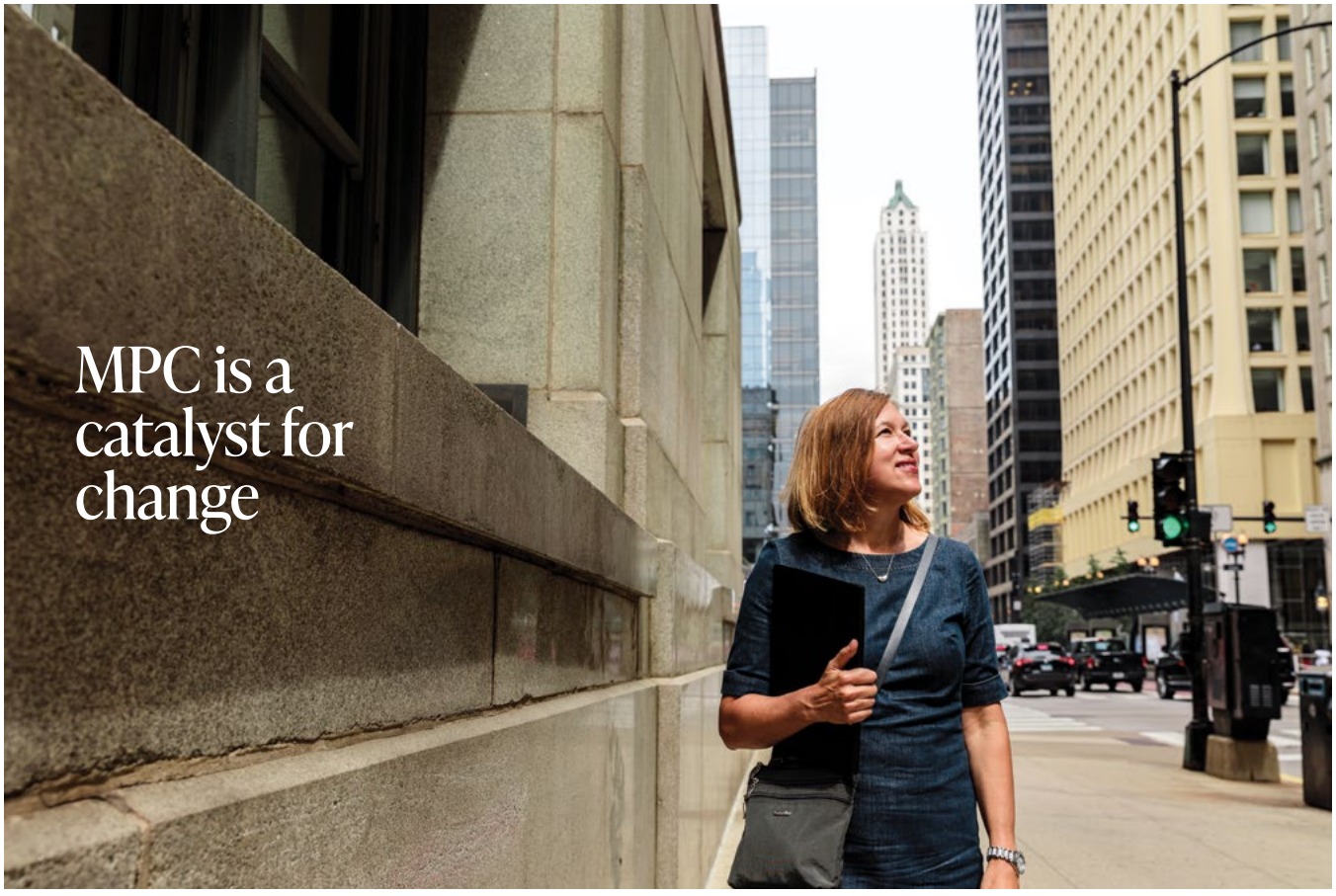
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