



Chicago Metropolitan  
Agency for Planning



# Bringing the region together for a stronger economic recovery

LEADERS FROM ACROSS NORTHEASTERN ILLINOIS HAVE JOINED EFFORTS  
FOR A MORE INCLUSIVE, PROSPEROUS, AND RESILIENT REGION

The COVID-19 pandemic has presented an opportunity to address long-standing challenges in northeastern Illinois' economy. While prolonged slow growth and deep inequities have held the region back, the pandemic also highlighted the enduring value of our diverse talent, advanced industries, extensive infrastructure, high quality of life, rich natural resources, and institutions of culture and innovation. These assets — like the pandemic's far-reaching impacts — are shared by communities across our region.

In September 2020, the seven county board chairs and the mayor of Chicago called on the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP) and Choose Chicago to assemble the Regional Economic Recovery Task Force and pursue robust economic growth that reduces inequity. Over the past year, this group helped the region focus on priorities, collaborate on solutions, and speak as one collective voice. With the task force completing its work in November 2021, we are pursuing these initiatives as a way forward for the region's recovery — working together, for the benefit of all.

## **ENGAGEMENT**

Equitable engagement — with partners, stakeholders, and the public — is at the heart of building an inclusive and thriving region. The pandemic underscored disparities as well as common needs across our communities.

CMAP and Choose Chicago brought together city and suburban leaders, industry experts, researchers, training and education providers, and nonprofits, among others. This included partnering with organizations whose communities face barriers to participating in the public process, including residents of color, low-income populations, people with disabilities, and those with limited English proficiency. Members shared insights through quarterly meetings, breakout discussions, small groups, surveys, and more. This process focused on immediate and long-term actions to accelerate a range of private and public initiatives already underway.

## **COLLABORATION**

The task force included a policy committee and three working groups that were each dedicated to addressing a key issue in this crisis — economic development, workforce, and tourism. Across these conversations, members called for an equitable recovery that prioritizes those most impacted by the pandemic, like women, people of color, small businesses, and industries that can support good jobs and wealth creation. Key takeaways included:

### ***Economic development***

Greater coordination and investment in economic development can strengthen the region's competitiveness, by leveraging existing efforts to deliver more than the sum of their parts. Cooperation reduces intra-regional competition and enhances the region's global market reach, capital projects, and site readiness. New research shows the potential to sustain small- and medium-sized manufacturers by improving market growth and ecosystem initiatives across local boundaries.

### ***Workforce***

In times of crisis, access to human and social services can help workers hold on to high-quality work. COVID-19 exposed the need for reassessing support services under current funding and improving how residents connect with available resources. Northeastern Illinois can also take a data-driven approach to implement long-standing priorities like work-based training and barrier reduction for target populations — efforts that will expand opportunity while reinvesting in the region's human capital.

### ***Tourism***

Metropolitan Chicago needs to assure residents and visitors that the region is open for business with one, unified message. As public health conditions improve, regional marketing can promote customers' safe return to the small businesses in hospitality, entertainment, and the arts that make us an international destination. Renewed partnerships and sustainable funding can build on momentum out of the crisis to carrying the region's tourism sector into a stronger post-pandemic future.

## **INITIATIVES**

Task force members identified opportunities for swift, joint action to address significant regional issues. Given the scale and scope of COVID-19's impacts, these initiatives prioritized lasting partnerships that would help to put available resources to work — both now and over the long term.

### ***The Only Thing Missing Is You***

Nine Chicagoland tourism organizations came together for the first time to launch a new, multi-channel marketing campaign, branded The Only Thing Missing is You. Targeted ads and social media outreach promoted the region's many cultural and outdoor activities to families looking to travel again. The campaign exceeded expectations, resulting in more than 17.8 million impressions across the Midwest. The group will continue to work together on building the tourism economy, but additional funding is needed to support and promote the region's small businesses.

### ***Regional economic development collaborative***

Despite our economy's metropolitan scope, local efforts to sustain growth are often disconnected and under-resourced. Spurred by discussion in the task force, several of the region's key economic development organizations are renewing their collaboration on business recruitment and retention. CMAP has launched a new project with industry experts to assess the region's most promising market opportunities. This joint effort will identify immediate actions to achieve greater efficiency, effectiveness, and scale in economic development.

### ***An inclusive growth framework for our region***

Northeastern Illinois cannot thrive when it leaves people and places behind. With funding from The Chicago Community Trust, CMAP is partnering with the Brookings Institution to convene partners across the private, civic, and public sectors around the importance of taking a regional approach to achieving shared prosperity. The project will draw on national and international best practices to define a framework and action plan for restarting inclusive economic growth.

### ***Advancing 211 services statewide***

211 is a simple, easy-to-remember resource to help residents find assistance with food, housing, transportation, counseling, and more. These human and social services can be critical to helping workers gain and maintain employment. In Illinois, just 55 of 102 counties — or 36 percent of the population — had access to information and referral services in 2020. The United Way is working with state and local leaders to bring 24-hour 211 service to major population centers like Chicago and Cook, DuPage, and Will counties. Additional support is needed for sustainable funding and key operational decisions to improve access to these services.

# THANK YOU

Achieving the region's goals takes working together to create lasting change. Members of the Regional Economic Recovery Task Force recognize that northeastern Illinois is stronger when we act as one. As we conclude this phase of the region's recovery, we want to thank you for your ongoing work and dedication to equitable economic progress. We look forward to continued collaboration on these regionally important issues.



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Executive Director  
Chicago Metropolitan Agency for  
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*Paul Goodrich, Co-Chair  
Chief Operating Officer  
City of Chicago*

## MEMBERS

1871  
Aurora Area CVB  
Chicago Aldermanic Ward 10  
Chicago Aldermanic Ward 31  
Chicago Aldermanic Ward 39  
Chicago Aldermanic Ward 43  
Chicago Apprentice Network  
Chicago Community Loan Fund  
The Chicago Community Trust  
Chicago Cook Workforce  
Partnership  
Chicago Jobs Council  
Chicago Minority Supplier  
Development Council  
Chicago Southland CVB  
Chicago Urban League  
Chicago Workforce Funders  
Alliance  
Chicagoland Chamber  
Chicagoland Food and Beverage  
Network  
Chicago's North Shore CVB  
Choose Chicago  
Choose DuPage  
City Colleges of Chicago  
City of Batavia  
City of Chicago  
City of Palos Hills  
Civic Consulting Alliance  
Cook County  
Corporate Coalition of Chicago  
Discover DuPage  
DuPage County  
DuPage Workforce Innovation  
Board  
DuPage CVB  
Elgin Community College  
Explore Elgin Area  
GOA Regional Business  
Association  
Governors State University  
Greater Oak Brook Chamber  
ICATT  
Illinois Department of Commerce  
and Economic Opportunity  
Illinois Hotel & Lodging  
Association  
Illinois House District 33  
Illinois Manufacturers' Association  
Illinois Office of Tourism  
Illinois Restaurant Association  
Illinois Senate District 33  
IMEC  
Intersect Illinois  
Invest Aurora  
Jane Addams Resource  
Corporation  
Kane County  
Kendall County  
Lake County  
Lake County Partners  
Lake County Workforce  
Development Board  
Manufacturing Renaissance  
Marcella Consulting  
MATTER  
McHenry County  
McHenry County Economic  
Development Corporation  
McHenry County Workforce  
Network Board  
Meet Chicago Northwest  
Metropolitan Mayors Caucus  
mHUB  
MxD  
National Able Network  
NIU Education Systems Center  
OAI, Inc.  
P33  
Schaumburg Business Association  
Skills for Chicagoland's Future  
Somercor  
South Suburban Mayors and  
Managers Association  
Southland Development Authority  
United Way of Metro Chicago  
Chicago Inclusive Economy Lab  
Voorhees Center  
Village of Fox Lake  
Village of Robbins  
Visit McHenry County  
Waubensee Community College  
Will County  
Will County Center for Economic  
Development  
Women's Business Development  
Center  
Workforce Investment Board of  
Will County  
Workforce Partners of  
Metropolitan Chicago  
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