



Preparing Metropolitan Chicago for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century

## NEWS RELEASE

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CONTACT: 312-332-2020

### **METROPOLIS PRINCIPLES EMPHASIZE NEED FOR HOUSING AND MASS TRANSIT CLOSE TO JOBS**

More than 100 Chicago area business leaders have signed a unique pledge to make access to affordable housing and mass transit a significant factor when making a business location decision.

Recognizing the problems created when employees must travel long distances to and from their jobs, the senior business executives have signed the new ***Metropolis Principles*** and have pledged to conduct their businesses accordingly.

"There is a mismatch between affordable housing and jobs within the region," said Andrew J. McKenna, Chairman of Chicago Metropolis 2020. "This mismatch – and the traffic jams and frustrations that go with it – is a regionwide issue that needs to be addressed now, or it will damage our ability to compete with other metropolitan regions.

"This is a call to collective action by business and local governments, whose decisions determine whether housing is available for our employees," McKenna continued. "The business community is stepping forward to lead by example. The ***Metropolis Principles*** can become a code of conduct for area businesses and can impact the land use decisions made by local governments throughout our six-county region."

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## Metropolis Principles

### Ad 1

The 1999 report – *Chicago Metropolis 2020: Preparing Metropolitan Chicago for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* – contained the genesis for the **Metropolis Principles**. The report was commissioned by The Commercial Club of Chicago, which created Chicago Metropolis 2020 as a non-profit with a strong base in the business community. The organization works in collaboration with other groups to improve the six-county region.

“More and more businesses today understand that long commutes not only impact the lives of their workers and their families but can cause an unstable and unproductive work force,” McKenna said.

“Businesses must ask whether a facility location or expansion decision will be conducive to recruiting and retaining a quality work force,” said King Harris, former President and CEO of Pittway Corporation and Senior Executive at Chicago Metropolis 2020.

“Workers at all levels of a business want reduced commuting time so they can spend more time with their families and not be stressed out by excessive time in cars or on mass transit lines.”

Harris explained that too many workers are finding it difficult to find affordable housing near work sites. The shortage of affordable housing is increasing, not decreasing, in the Chicago metropolitan area as property values escalate faster than wages and affordable properties are torn down in favor of upscale housing.

Harris, who leads the effort to expand the number of businesses pledged to the **Metropolis Principles**, noted that many municipalities are actively courting new commercial developments such as offices, factories or shopping malls to enhance their tax bases.

## Metropolis Principles

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“Too many people who work in communities during the day cannot live in them at night. Barriers to affordable housing are widespread and not being removed,” Harris said. “Many municipalities understand that, but others have chosen to enact restrictive zoning laws intended to encourage business development and high-end housing at the expense of the people who will commute to and from those offices, plants and shopping malls.”

Chicago Metropolis 2020 has begun to gather information on the jobs/housing situation in the metropolitan area. Later this year, it will identify specific communities that are trying to create or maintain affordable housing near job sites and mass transit lines. Those findings will be provided to signers of the ***Metropolis Principles*** and other companies concerned about affordable housing issues. Chicago Metropolis 2020 representatives have begun to explain the ***Metropolis Principles*** to interested mayors and city administrators and will continue to reach out to local government leaders and city planners.

The text of the ***Metropolis Principles*** states in part: “In making decisions relating to the expansion of an existing facility or the location of a new facility in a given community, we will give substantial weight to whether a community has zoning, building and land use policies that allow the construction of housing which is affordable to working people; and whether a community is served by reliable and accessible mass transit, especially mass transit near work sites.”

The complete text and list of all businesses that have endorsed the ***Metropolis Principles*** is attached.

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## Metropolis Principles

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Earlier this year, Chicago Metropolis 2020 published *Regional Realities*, the Metropolis Index report on the condition of life in the six-county region. The Metropolis Index flagged several warning signs of potential trouble for the region's robust economy, and many of those statistics centered on the same issues addressed by the ***Metropolis Principles***.

They included:

- The average motorist experiences 44 hours of delays per year because of congested streets and highways.
- More than one-third of the region's one million rental households are considered "rent burdened" because renters pay more than 30 percent of their monthly income in rent.
- While two-thirds of homes sold in the region in 1999 were affordable to buyers earning the region's median income, houses in many sections of the region are not affordable to buyers earning the median income.
- The share of new jobs located near transit stations declined from 49 percent in 1990 to 46 percent in 1995.
- Only 9 percent of new housing constructed between 1990 and 1995 was built within one-half mile of a Metra or CTA train station. Before 1990, about 46 percent of all housing was constructed within walking distance of a rail station.

"One of the goals of Chicago Metropolis 2020 is to promote regional stewardship," said George A. Ranney, Jr., President and CEO of Chicago Metropolis 2020. "The idea is that local leaders should make decisions that benefit the entire region and that we should work together to solve our regional challenges."

## Metropolis Principles

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“The ***Metropolis Principles*** encourage just that,” Ranney continued. “Public officials at all levels of government need to know that the priorities of businesses are changing. The endorsers of the ***Metropolis Principles*** don’t dictate local actions, but they do send a message that location decisions must hinge on much more than tax breaks and highway exits. The quality of life is important, too.”

For more information about Chicago Metropolis 2020 and the Metropolis Principles, call 312-332-2020 or visit the web site at [www.chicagometropolis2020.org](http://www.chicagometropolis2020.org).

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