

Chicago Tribune

Founded June 10, 1847

TONY W. HUNTER, Publisher ◆ **GEROULD W. KERN**, Editor ◆ **R. BRUCE DOLD**, Editorial Page Editor
 @twhunter, gplus.to/twhunter @gerrykern, gplus.to/gerrykern @brucedold, gplus.to/brucedold

BILL ADEE, SVP/Digital ◆ **JANE HIRT**, Managing Editor ◆ **JOYCELYN WINNECKE**, Associate Editor ◆ **PETER KENDALL**, Deputy Managing Editor
 @bill80, gplus.to/billadee @janehirt, gplus.to/janehirt @jwinnecke, gplus.to/jwinnecke @pkendalltribune, gplus.to/peterkendall

EDITORIALS

A NEW PLAN OF CHICAGO



BRIAN CASSELLA/TRIBUNE PHOTO

The last wide-ranging city plan was completed in 1966. The next blueprint should spring from the neighborhoods.

Give Chicagoans a voice

Chicago's heart-stopping lakefront, thrumming Loop and brawny riverfront did not happen by accident or sheer luck.

This city rose from swamp to global elite because people — including famed architect Daniel Burnham and a legion of politicians, developers and lesser-known neighborhood dynamos — never stopped hatching big plans to attract industry, build strong neighborhoods and create a city truly in a garden.

Over decades, Chicago's leaders mapped out a series of overarching, comprehensive plans. The last wide-ranging city plan — not just ad hoc building projects or retail developments — was completed in 1966.

That vision spurred new library branches, schools, community colleges, housing developments, industrial parks, roadways, fire and police stations, transit expansions and health clinics. It led to the revived Navy Pier, the Museum Campus and Millennium Park. It helped create a downtown that draws residents and tourists, not just daytime workers, and doesn't close the shades at 5 p.m.

Just as important: It helped protect the lakefront and riverfront and carve out historic districts like Prairie Avenue.

For half a century, however, the city has not drafted such an all-encompassing planning effort. "Major plans from recent years have been largely ignored and 'deal making' has

replaced structured planning processes," write D. Bradford Hunt and Jon DeVries in their 2013 book "Planning Chicago." "Planning has been too often demoted and replaced by one-off projects."

Nearly 50 years after the last comprehensive plan, some of the city's most influential organizations and thinkers propose a terrific idea: a new, large-scale, long-range plan to help Chicago thrive for generations to come.

The Smart Big Idea here: Start with voices of Chicago's neighborhoods. Build the plan — a blueprint for the future — from those bottom-up ideas. Encourage Chicagoans in every neighborhood to contribute their best thinking to improve the livability, infrastructure and daily culture of their city.

We know Chicagoans have impressive ideas because we've seen them, appreciated them, promoted them: In the Tribune Editorial Board's effort to craft a new Plan of Chicago — a complement to Burnham's 1909 planning opus — we have invited readers to present proposals to combat crime, improve schools, boost parents and families, attract jobs, rescue City Hall finances.

We've fielded more than 800 proposals from all over the city, with more flowing in every day.

Chicago needs those ideas — and many more — if it's to surmount these challenges and thrive.

We see the call for a

comprehensive plan as a way for more voices to champion the best of these ideas bubbling up from Chicagoans and their institutions, organizations, foundations and employers.

Yes, such a massive plan will be expensive. Last week, The Chicago Community Trust chipped in \$195,000 to spark what could be the start of a new and comprehensive city plan. Community Trust President and CEO Terry Mazany tells us the first step will be to collect previous city plans, as well as current Chicago demographic and market data, to gauge Chicago's economic competitiveness and the quality of life in its neighborhoods.

That's just a first step, however. Mazany points out that a comprehensive plan won't happen unless Chicago's major corporations, foundations and neighborhood groups step up and contribute. And unless City Hall signs on enthusiastically as a participant and a resource in this bottom-up campaign.

We hope Mayor Rahm Emanuel will view this as an opportunity for him and his administration to help set civic goals that will play out not over years, but over decades. This plan ought to create more of a legacy than any mayor, past, present or future, could create by himself or herself.

We've praised Emanuel for making difficult decisions even though they have angered teachers, police — just about every-

one at one time or another. He has been accused of brushing aside residents' complaints, of turning a deaf ear.

Here's a chance for the mayor to give Chicagoans a voice in their city's future, their children's future. A chance to show Chicagoans that their voices *do* count. And that *every* neighborhood counts.

Last fall, in a Tribune commentary, Mazany defined the powerful links that bind Chicagoans: "A growing Lincoln Square remains fragile and vulnerable if Roseland struggles; a prosperous Orland Park is eventually stunted by a neglected Harvey." In other words, Chicago's economic heart — its downtown — can't flourish if its neighborhoods don't.

That's the best argument we've heard to launch a powerhouse Chicago plan.

In two years, Chicago marks the 50th anniversary of its last plan. That's plenty of time to convene community residents and leaders, distill the best ideas, draft a focused plan — and by that we mean a plan of *action* to improve the quality of life for all Chicagoans.

The city faces enormous challenges. Rampant crime in too many neighborhoods. Faltering schools. Fleeing employers and jobs.

But Chicago also has formidable assets. To thrive in this century and beyond, the city must harness the greatest of its greatest resources: the innovative ideas, and fierce loyalty, of its citizens.