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Homes for a Changing Region Toolkit
Process Guide

February 2015

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Public Visioning Charrette Meeting
Shared Community Vision
Formation of Goals and Objectives

5 DRAFT PLAN
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Introduction

The *Homes for a Changing Region* project began in 2004, with the goal of using demographic forecasts to plan for the Chicago region's future housing needs—in other words, it called for a proactive approach to housing solutions, rather than a reactive one. In 2006 the project began to plan for specific suburbs, looking in-depth at the housing stock of each community and providing recommendations for creating balanced housing options for the future. Since 2010 communities have been studied in "clusters," meaning that each overall plan examines neighboring suburbs together, rather than examining three very different suburbs at once. This allows us to see how individual suburbs are influenced by their surrounding region and implement changes on a larger scale.

The projections in these studies do not simply measure overall population growth or decline, but also provide demographic data on projected income, age and household size of that population. These data are invaluable, because knowing how much housing a community needs is only useful if local governments also know what type of units people will want. This information is likely to become even more vital to the success of communities in the coming years, as the region continues to experience important changes, including the aging of the population and growth of the Latino community, as well as the influence of national trends, such as the increasing demand for smaller homes that are more energy-efficient.

Overall, the *Homes for a Changing Region* process enables municipal leaders to chart future demand and supply trends for housing in their communities and develop long-term housing policy plans based on sound market research and input from their residents. These plans aim to create a balanced mix of housing, serve current and future populations, and enhance livability. The project implementation team has recently consisted of staff from the Metropolitan Mayors Caucus, Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP) and Metropolitan Planning Council (MPC). The team has created this toolkit to build the capacity of local municipalities to implement their own *Homes for a Changing Region* studies. The goal is to create expertise at the local level so that municipalities in the metropolitan Chicago region will be prepared to meet their future housing needs.

The value of *Homes* is that it does not require a one-size-fits-all approach, and can be tailored to meet the needs of different municipalities. A municipality can decide to undertake different aspects of the project depending on the level of analysis and staff time commitment desired. For example, a local government may already be undertaking a comprehensive plan process and want to incorporate the *Homes* analysis into its housing chapter. Another may want to engage residents in a discussion about future housing development in the community.

Homes for a Changing Region is a good fit for any municipality grappling with the following questions:

What is my community's capacity to accommodate future residents? To plan for future households and housing, it is important to compare forecasted population growth to capacity for new development. The development/redevelopment analysis considers how a municipality could grow over the next 30 years based on current land use regulations, development approvals, and key development sites. Based on the results of that analysis, a municipality may decide to amend their land use regulations in order to accommodate additional growth.

- *Are my residents spending too much of their income on housing costs? Homes* provides information about the percentage of their income existing residents are spending on housing. This information provides municipal leaders with a sense of how many of their local households are burdened by housing costs. It can also provide insight into the potential for reduced housing costs to support local economic development, since residents who spend less of their overall income on housing have more to spend on other expenses and local purchases.

- *Does a given development proposal make sense for my municipality? Will my municipality need more rental (or other type of) housing in the future?* Communities that are being approached by developers proposing a specific type of housing development may wonder if there is long-term demand for that housing type in their community. *Homes* identifies opportunities and gaps in the housing profile for a municipality and can help elected officials make informed decisions about the housing stock that is the best long-term fit for their community.

The following section outlines some key questions local governments should answer before deciding to undertake the project. It also provides an overview of the process and steps to undertake a *Homes* project and will give local governments a better understanding of the time commitment and expertise required to complete this housing planning exercise.

Section 1: Key questions to consider

How will my municipality use this report?

Municipalities have used *Homes for a Changing Region* reports in different ways. Some municipalities treat it as a study that they can reference when considering development proposals. Others will formally adopt it as the housing chapter of their comprehensive plan. A municipality should decide up front how they plan to use *Homes*, as this may dictate whether they want the project to be staff or consultant driven. If the municipality only wants to reference the data analysis aspects of the project, it may be possible and more cost-effective to complete the work in-house. If the municipality is considering implementing policy changes based on the *Homes* analysis, it will need to consider if it has the internal staff capacity for this type of work or if it needs to hire a consultant.

Who will lead the project?

One of the most important decisions a municipality will need to make before embarking on a *Homes for a Changing Region* project is to determine if the project will be staff-driven or if a consultant will be hired to perform a majority of the work. In determining which option to pursue, the municipality should decide what level of analysis they would like to undertake and if their staff have the time to complete that analysis.

Overall, the project has four major components: 1) Data Analysis, 2) Public Outreach, 3) Development of Policy Recommendations, and 4) Writing. It may be possible for the municipality to rely on staff for some components of the project and hire a consultant to complete the rest. Or, as discussed earlier, perhaps the municipality will decide to only undertake a particular portion of the *Homes* work rather than complete the project in its entirety.

On average, it has taken the project team 12 months to complete a *Homes* project in a municipality. This timeline will vary if the project is staff driven: on the one hand, meetings with municipal leadership will be easier to schedule, but tasks such as the development of policy recommendations and writing will likely take longer, depending on the level of staff expertise and workload. (*A sample project timeline* is included in the toolkit.)

What resources are available for the development and presentation of policy recommendations?

The most challenging part of the *Homes* process is always the development of appropriate policy recommendations based on the interpretation of data findings and community input. Staff that will be responsible for developing policy recommendations should be somewhat familiar with different housing policy tools. There are a number of resources that this toolkit recommends which can help familiarize staff with different housing policies, including the publication *Home Grown: Local Housing Strategies in Action*, which describes a number of housing

"best practices" implemented by local governments around the Chicago metropolitan region, showing local government staff how their peers are addressing housing issues, which can help spark ideas for replicating or improving upon these approaches to address their own local housing challenges.

We also recommend that staff develop an advisory committee of local stakeholders and experts that can provide input, comments, and review of policy recommendations throughout the process. (More information about the advisory committee is included later in this section.)

Keep in mind that the policy recommendations that come out of the *Homes for a Changing Region* process may be new and unfamiliar to local elected officials. If the project is to be successful, municipal staff will need to feel comfortable presenting new ideas to their village board/city council. If staff are recommending a new policy through *Homes*, it may be helpful to recruit an expert on that policy to speak to the board/council about the topic; *Home Grown* includes contact information for each best practice it describes and may be a helpful resource to identify local and regional experts on a particular topic area.

How do I engage elected officials as champions of plan recommendations?

In order for *Homes for a Changing Region* to be successful, local leadership needs to feel ownership over the plan and comfortable with its recommendations. It is therefore essential that leadership has the opportunity to review the recommendations and provide feedback before final writing begins. Draft recommendations should be presented to the advisory committee for comment and feedback. It is important that the advisory committee contain at least one elected official (ideally the mayor, but could also be a trustee or council member), so that when the report and recommendations go to the full council/board for review, one elected official can speak to the substance of the recommendations and work to gain the support of his/her peers. These draft recommendations should be vetted through the advisory committee and municipal leadership prior to writing of the final report begins.

How can I save on costs if I want to hire a consultant?

If the municipality is considering hiring a consultant to complete the project, a possible way to save on costs would be for staff to perform the data-related tasks and hire the consultant to develop the policy recommendations and complete the writing, or vice-versa, since some communities may be comfortable developing policies but will want some expert help with the calculations.

Who will be on the project team?

Regardless of whether the project is staff or consultant-driven, it is important to determine who will have the primary responsibility for making presentations to the public and elected officials. In addition, a project manager will need to be identified. This person will be responsible for coordinating meetings, as well as making sure the project timeline is progressing and that the recommendations and report drafts are reviewed by the necessary municipal leadership.

The project manager should also put together the advisory committee that will oversee the project. The advisory or steering committee will be there to provide feedback and input on the data analysis and policy recommendations before they are presented to village board/city council. Possible steering committee members include:

- One elected official, either the mayor or an engaged trustee. This member will be able to update the village board/city council on the project progress and champion its recommendations to other elected officials as needed.
- One key municipal staff member that will manage municipal involvement in the project, such as a Village Manager or the head of the Community Development or Planning departments.
- County staff: Community Development, Planning, or other department focused on land use planning and programming federal community development funds.
- A member of a municipal Plan Commission or Housing Commission.
- A landlord.
- A local developer and/or real estate professional.
- A leader of a community organization or a local not-for-profit.
- A homeowners association representative or block club member.

Should my municipality pursue this project in coordination with neighboring communities?

In recent years, the project team has studied housing issues that are shared between neighboring municipalities, and has included an interjurisdictional chapter in *Homes* reports. Housing challenges often span municipal borders, and sometimes policy solutions can be best addressed at a subregional scale. Municipalities pursuing a *Homes* project may want to talk to their neighboring communities to determine if there is interest in pursuing an interjurisdictional approach to the project. There are a number of conditions that make an interjurisdictional *Homes* plan ideal. First, the municipalities should have shared challenges or market conditions, which will make it possible to identify policy solutions that can address those challenges in a collaborative fashion. Second, it is helpful if the municipalities already have a good relationship and prior experience collaborating on other issues. It can be beneficial if a pre-existing structure for collaboration exists, such as common membership in a Council of Government (COG); in particular, a shared structure such as a COG can be a useful venue through which to organize meetings and pursue recommended policies. Finally, policy solutions developed through an interjurisdictional *Homes* plan may require sharing of resources to address common challenges, and municipalities should be willing to explore this possibility before embarking on an interjurisdictional *Homes* plan.

It is possible to complete a municipal *Homes* plan while also undertaking an interjurisdictional analysis. Some housing issues are best addressed locally while others might benefit from interjurisdictional coordination. If opting to pursue an interjurisdictional approach, it is beneficial that the municipalities have one "coordinator" that can serve as the person responsible for scheduling group meetings and making sure the project deliverables are on

track. This can be a local government staff person from a lead community, a representative from a common community/membership organization (such as a COG), or a consultant. The group will also need to determine if they want to write an interjurisdictional chapter for their *Homes* report and how this will be managed amongst the communities.

Both the Metropolitan Mayors Caucus and Metropolitan Planning Council have a number of resources on their websites that describe interjurisdictional efforts that have moved beyond pursuing a *Homes* plan. For example, groups of municipalities throughout Cook County have formalized their relationships in "housing collaboratives" through intergovernmental agreements and a shared staff member.

Section 2: *Homes for a Changing Region* process and key steps

This section outlines the steps needed to complete the *Homes for a Changing Region* project in its entirety. Keep in mind that a municipality may opt to pursue only certain aspects of the project depending on the resources available and the magnitude of the challenges to be addressed. Below we describe each step and the typical timeframe for completion, which will help local governments determine the level of *Homes* that is right for them. Please note that the appendix includes a more detailed project scope that may be referenced for additional information.

Task 1: Data analysis

The first step in the *Homes for a Changing Region* project is conducting a full spectrum analysis of the current and future housing needs for a municipality. The tasks below provide a brief overview of the steps involved and the information that will be gathered and analyzed. Please note that the [Data Analysis Guide](#) included in the *Homes* toolkit provides much more detailed instructional steps on how to conduct the *Homes* data analysis.

Gather data

Data will be gathered from multiple sources, including the Census and American Community Survey, proprietary data from Geographic Information Systems (GIS) mapping software company ESRI and other sources, county data, and regional data. The compilation of this data has been automated and further described in the Data Analysis Guide. These data sources are used to describe the significant characteristics of the local housing markets, including supply, demand, condition, and the cost of housing.

Local government staff and/or consultants should also familiarize themselves with the materials listed below in order to help inform the project, including any housing goals or priority areas that the municipality has designated. If working with a consultant, local government staff should provide these documents as background materials:

- **A zoning ordinance (full text).**
- **A zoning map.** Ideally this should be transmitted as a GIS file, such as a feature class or shapefile.
- **A current comprehensive plan (full text).**
- **Current comprehensive plan maps.** Ideally these should be transmitted as GIS files, such as feature classes or shapefiles, but the main goal is to identify areas where more (or less) compact development will be allowed in the future.
- **Any recent subarea plans.** These will contain both narrative and maps, so whenever possible maps should be transmitted as GIS files.

- **Environmental features maps.** Ideally these should be transmitted as GIS files, such as feature classes or shapefiles.
- **Sidewalk or bike lane maps.** Ideally these should be transmitted as GIS files, such as feature classes or shapefiles, but the main goal is to have a sense of where development should be prohibited for environmental reasons.

These data sources will be used to conduct the capacity analysis, better understand the community, and ensure that the recommendations build on previous efforts where applicable.

Analyze current housing

Local government staff or consultants should use the data gathered in Task 1 to establish the existing conditions for housing in the municipality. They should analyze it to identify matches and mismatches between their community's existing housing stock and current needs. Typically, this analysis results in charts and graphs that illustrate the following data:

- Current population and household counts.
- Percent change of population and households since 2000 Census.
- Percent owner vs. renter-occupied households at various income levels.
- Percent owner vs. renter-occupied households living in various unit types (single-family, townhome, multi-family, other).
- Percent owner-occupied households paying more than 30 and 50 percent of income in housing costs currently and compared to 2000 figures.
- Percent renter-occupied households paying more than 30 and 50 percent of income in housing costs currently and compared to 2000 figures.
- Number of households compared to number of owner-occupied housing units affordable at various incomes.
- Number of households compared to number of renter-occupied housing units affordable at various incomes.

Analyze capacity for new housing

Staff or consultants should use the data gathered to identify the amount of housing potential by assessing the capacity of zoning in their community using GIS. This analysis is conducted through a multi-step process. Land identified as residential, commercial, office, mixed-use, or vacant is assumed to have some redevelopment potential. Then, estimates for future housing are created by assuming densities by zone. These calculations result in a capacity estimate for each zone on vacant and developed land. This allows tables to be generated that depict the number of units, by zoning district and type (single-family, multi-family, etc.), that can be built over the long term if current policies remain unchanged.

Conduct workforce analysis

Staff or consultants should use the U.S. Economic Census Bureau and other data sources to create a profile of the workforce in the municipality and identify key employment centers,

industry sectors, and commuting patterns. This analysis should be used in the housing recommendations with the workforce needs of the local economy. Generally, this analysis will result in the development of the following tables or charts:

- Number of residents vs. employees working in various major industrial categories.
- Average annual earnings of employees working in various major industrial categories.

Compare capacity for new housing to forecasted population growth

2040 forecasts of population, household, and employment growth for municipalities within Northeastern Illinois are available on the [CMAP website](#). Municipalities outside of the CMAP region may be able to request forecast data from the county or [Metropolitan Planning Organization](#). Consultants or local government staff should compare the number of new households forecasted to be located within the community with the number of units that can be built, based on potential for development and density allowed under current policies. The balance, shortfall, or surplus identified should inform the development of recommendations.

Timeline

It should take approximately 1-2 months to fully complete data analysis in its entirety. The compilation of the data itself can be done instantaneously for municipalities in the seven county CMAP region of Northeastern Illinois. Other municipalities across the state can compile this information with minimal effort by entering data into the Envision Tomorrow Balanced Housing Model available on the toolkit website. Consultants or local government staff should spend the bulk of this time analyzing and interpreting the data compiled. Some municipalities may opt to only complete this portion of the project and use the data to inform their decision-making process regarding future developments in the municipality or in the consideration of certain housing policies. If a municipality is undertaking a complete *Homes* project, then completing this task should account for approximately 20 percent of the project's total time.

Meetings

In addition to conducting the analysis, it is recommended that local government staff or consultants hold at least one to two meetings with municipal leadership throughout this stage of the project to review the data findings and discuss any concerns regarding housing challenges in the municipality. This discussion will help to inform the policy recommendations made later in the report process. If only pursuing the data analysis aspect of the project, the data presentation can serve as a launching point for future discussions about appropriate housing development and policies in the municipality. It is recommended that the data is first presented to municipal leadership in a small meeting setting before presenting it to the board/council so that there is time for comfortable discussion regarding any issues/concerns related to housing challenges in the community. If outside consultants are completing the project, it is recommended that local government staff take the consultants on a driving tour of the municipality to familiarize them with the local housing stock and point out any neighborhoods where future housing development/rehabilitation may be located. More information on the appropriate meeting schedule is provided in the [sample Scope of Work](#) included in the toolkit.

Task 2: Public outreach

Successful planning requires the input of the local community. The public must have a chance to assess and understand their options and then communicate their preferences – and then see those preferences reflected in housing plans. A municipality aiming to complete a full *Homes* plan will want to engage the public in the process in order to lend legitimacy to the plan and ensure local buy-in for the policy recommendations.

There are various methods for capturing the general public's best ideas for the *Homes* project which require different levels of resources and time commitment. Whether conducting an in-person workshop or an on-line survey, the most important aspect of this phase of the project is to present the *Homes* data to the public and get their input for what the future of housing should look like in the community. Additional information on options for engaging the public in the *Homes* process is included in the Outreach Guide. Overall, planning for and conducting the workshop (or any other outreach method such as an online survey) should take approximately 20 percent of the project's timeline.

If the municipality wants to pursue a public workshop, there will need to be a strong commitment to marketing the workshop in order to ensure good attendance. If the community has recently gone through a planning process (such as for a comprehensive plan), it may be difficult to get high attendance at a workshop, requiring exploration of other public engagement strategies, such as on-line surveys.

Finally, it is important that residents be assured that the purpose of the project is not to plan for a specific development proposal. Marketing materials for the workshop should convey this message, and any press about the event should make clear that the purpose is to gather feedback on what future housing should look like in the community. In our experience conveying this message from the start is necessary to avoid confusion and facilitate a successful workshop experience.

Task 3: Develop policy recommendations

The most difficult task in the *Homes for a Changing Region* project is interpreting the data and public feedback received in order to generate policy recommendations to address the future housing needs of the community. The staff should look at the housing trends and capacity of the municipality to determine its primary needs. The results of public outreach efforts should also be used to guide policy recommendations. As mentioned earlier, there are a number of resources that local government staff can utilize when developing the policy recommendations, including *Home Grown* and the local advisory committee created for the *Homes* project. Developing policy recommendations should take approximately 30 percent of the project timeline.

In addition to its local advisory committee, a municipality may consider putting together an additional "expert panel" for a morning/afternoon event to discuss policy recommendations which the community is considering. These may be experts who have already implemented similar programs, including other local government staff, housing developers, and/or representatives from regional policy organizations. Background materials can be circulated to the panel in advance, including demographic and projection data, as well as a brief outline of recommendations being considered. The panel can spend a few hours discussing the feasibility of a particular strategy in a community. If a panel is not possible, background research through phone calls and emails by the project manager may be able to gather the same information.

In order for *Homes for a Changing Region* to be successful, local leadership needs to feel ownership over the plan and comfortable with its recommendations. It is essential that high level staff and elected officials have the opportunity to review the recommendations and provide feedback before writing begins.

Task 4: Writing

Writing the report should take the final 30 percent of the typical project timeline. After the draft is completed, it is important that the advisory committee and municipal leadership have an opportunity to review and edit before the report is finalized for review by board or council. Sample past reports can be found on the [CMAP website](#) or [Mayors Caucus website](#). A typical *Homes* report includes the following sections:

- **Project Summary.** This section provides a very brief overview of the plan and key issues it will address.

- **Demographic Trends.** The first major section of the report describes current population and future growth projections.

- **Current Housing Market.** This section provides information key to understanding the local housing dynamics, including affordability of existing renters and owners, as well as how the local job base impacts the housing market. It provides a summary of the largest local industries, information about where residents commute for work and where local workers live. Typical sub-sections include:

  - Housing Affordability
  - Current Ownership Housing Market
  - Current Rental Housing Market
  - Jobs, Transportation and Housing

- **Projecting Future Housing Needs.** Proactive housing planning needs to take into account those who might live in the community in the future. This section provides some analysis of who will want to live in a municipality in the next 30 years and the

types of housing that would be necessary to meet the needs of current and future residents. Sub-sections include:

- o Future Ownership Needs
- o Future Rental Needs
- o Housing Demand by Type of Unit

- **Capacity for Growth.** In order to plan for the future households and housing, it is also important to look at capacity. The development/redevelopment analysis considers how a municipality could grow over the next 30 years based on current land use regulations, development approvals, and key development sites. In addition, the vacancy analysis predicts the percentage of existing vacant units that will be occupied in the future. Sub-sections include:

  - o Development/Redevelopment Analysis
  - o Vacancy Analysis

- **Conclusions and Recommendations.** The concluding section of the report describes the policy change needed to best accommodate future growth and address existing challenges.

Section 3: Interjurisdictional approach

If opting to pursue a *Homes for a Changing Region* project using an interjurisdictional approach, the steps will be similar to those in a project involving a single municipality. Data can be aggregated for the municipalities involved and analyzed collectively (more information on this approach is provided in the Data Analysis Guide included in the toolkit). There are a few other key staffing issues to keep in mind when pursuing an interjurisdictional report.

Project steering committee

To formalize the interjurisdictional aspects of the project, each municipality should assign one staff member and one elected official to sit on the project steering committee. The assigned member should be the municipality's key staff contact for the project. The elected official could be either the mayor or another engaged trustee/council member.

The role of the steering committee will be to vet subregional data analysis and inform any changes to the housing cost model. The steering committee will also inform, vet and approve the subregional analysis and policy recommendations in the final plan. Because approval of the subregional analysis and policy development recommendations requires agreement by the leadership of each community, key staff contacts should have the ability to seek and receive feedback from municipal leadership, including elected officials, on all topics as the project progresses. The elected official serving on the steering committee can also assist with gathering this feedback.

Project coordinator

A project coordinator should be assigned to organize meetings with the steering committee. This could be a local government staff person, a consultant, or a representative from a key stakeholder group/community organization. This position requires the ability to understand the issues of all participating towns. The coordinator should be responsible for facilitating the receipt of feedback on project deliverables from the municipalities. They will also facilitate and provide logistical support for meetings of the steering committee or any subregional workshops. Finally, the coordinator should also play a coordinating, consensus building, and advisory role on the development of subregional recommendations.

A number of meetings should occur throughout the process. A preliminary meeting with the steering committee should occur after the interjurisdictional data analysis has been completed, so that it can be presented to the steering committee for feedback. At this meeting, the steering committee members should also discuss local housing challenges in order to begin to identify common concerns and potential areas for future collaboration. The discussion at this meeting should serve as a launching point for the interjurisdictional recommendations. The steering committee should meet again once draft recommendations have been developed, to sign off on them and approve prior to report finalization. Steering committee members will be responsible for ensuring that input and feedback has been received from their own municipal leadership prior to signing off on the recommendations.

It will need to be decided early on in the project who will be completing the analysis and writing tasks for the interjurisdictional *Homes* project, and whether one municipality could take on this additional staffing commitment or if a consultant is needed to take on this workload. It would likely be helpful to have an outside/neutral party be completing this work if resources allow.

Finally, if the municipalities are committed to implementing the interjurisdictional *Homes* recommendations, it will be useful for the steering committee to stay in place in the next phase as a group which meets regularly to discuss implementation plans and progress. Similarly, it may be useful to have the coordinator continue their leadership role during the implementation phase. Many municipalities have formalized this interjurisdictional cooperation through intergovernmental agreements. To learn more about local suburban housing collaboratives and their successes, please visit the [Metropolitan Mayors Caucus website](#).

Conclusion

Overall, the *Homes for a Changing Region* process is a beneficial tool for municipalities that want to be prepared to meet the demands of an ever changing housing market. The plans are rooted in market realities and promote policies and strategies that aim to create a balanced mix of housing for a community. The Metropolitan Mayors Caucus, Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning, and Metropolitan Planning Council have spent the last few years improving the *Homes* process so that participating municipalities are left with the best possible product. This toolkit aims to expand on that effort by building the capacity of municipalities to undertake their own *Homes for a Changing Region* plans, empowering local communities to play a lead role in ensuring a housing stock that will allow their current and future residents to thrive.
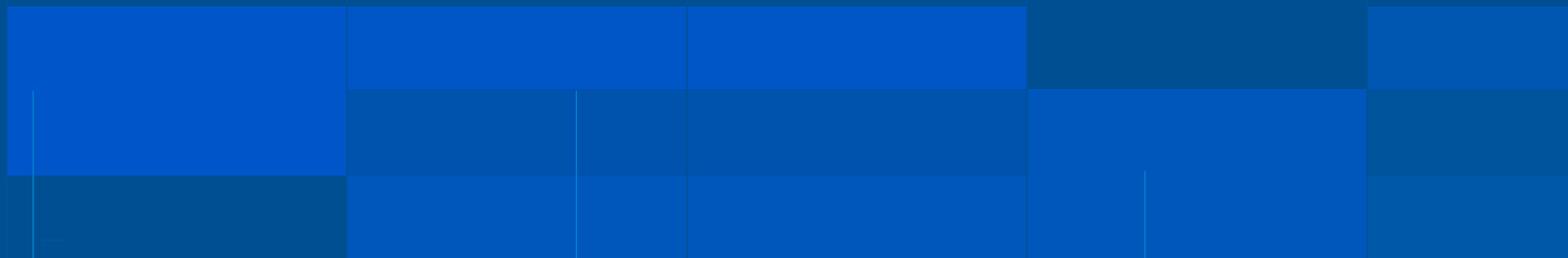
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FY15-0074