
From: Juanita Irizarry <IrizarryJ@FOTP.ORG>
Sent: Thursday, January 14, 2021 2:29 PM
To: envcomments
Cc: Abigail Johnston
Subject: Friends of the Parks comments re: General Iron/RMG
Attachments: FOTP General Iron Final Permit Public Comments 1.14.2021.pdf

Importance: High

[Warning: External email]

Dear Dr. Arwady—

Please find attached Friends of the Parks' comments in opposition of the siting of the relocated operations of General Iron to the RMG facility on the Southeast Side.

Sincerely--

Juanita

Juanita Irizarry
Executive Director
Friends of the Parks
17 N. State St., Suite 1450
Chicago, IL 60602
312-857-2757 ext. 2
irizarryj@FOTP.ORG
www.fotp.org





January 14, 2020

Dr. Allison Arwardy
Commissioner of the Chicago Department of Public Health

Dear Dr. Arwardy,

Friends of the Parks (FOTP) is an Illinois not-for-profit organization founded in 1975 and dedicated to promoting healthy parks in the City of Chicago. Our goals include ensuring park lands are equitably distributed and managed across the city in a way that supports healthy communities and a healthy environment.

As such, we write to you regarding the pending air pollution control permit filed by Reserve Management Group (RMG) for the purpose of relocating General Iron's recycling operations to the Southeast Side at 11600 S. Burley Avenue. FOTP urges you to consider the following factors and deny this permit. The City of Chicago should not facilitate the relocation of dangerous operations that offer environmental threats to the 10th Ward, an already overburdened Environmental Justice community.

The proposed relocation site of General Iron by its parent company, RMG, to 11600 S. Burley Avenue, is within walking distance of Rowan Park. Rowan Park is adjacent to George Washington High School and serves as space for high school students to participate in recreational activities. Additionally, Rowan Park is a key gathering place for the 10th Ward community, where residents regularly visit for their physical and mental health--and especially now, amidst a pandemic in which more people than ever are turning to outdoor spaces to socially-distance.

This is not the first instance of the City of Chicago being complacent in allowing polluters to be sited near local parks. Finkl Steel moved its operations to Burnside within a couple of blocks of Burnside Park and Byrnes Park, and the MAT Asphalt plant continues to emit fumes on McKinley Park. Low-income communities and communities of color that we now find are experiencing particularly high rates of COVID-19 are bearing the brunt of these poor decisions, and their health and well-being continues to be threatened. The City of Chicago must not continue to turn a blind eye to the issue of environmental threats being located near parks, including this most timely issue on the Southeast Side.

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Healthy Parks for a Healthy Chicago

The science behind the pollution putting the Southeast Side community at risk is simple:

- Particulate matter (PM 10 & PM 2.5) will be released into the environment from RMG/General Iron and put resident's lung health and immune systems at risk and further compromise the health of the 10th Ward community amidst a pandemic that targets respiratory systems.
- George Washington High School conducted a study that found winds from RMG's location to blow Southwest to Northeast. With the wind pattern present, wind will carry pollutants directly to the learning environment of students and towards community members using Rowan Park.
- According to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the World Health Organization (WHO), chronic exposure to particulate matter and air pollutants results in higher asthma rates amongst adolescents, higher lung cancer rates, depression, lower academic performance, and a decreased lifespan.

The Southeast Side historically has battled petcoke and manganese, to name a few. Just recently, arsenic and lead were found in children's baseball fields in the area. Meanwhile, the Confined Disposal Facility at the confluence of the Calumet River and the lakefront is leaking PCBs, mercury, arsenic, and lead back into our water supply, an issue which the Army Corps of Engineers tried to keep from public view.

As all of Chicago has seen, the operations at the General Iron site in Lincoln Park have led to an explosion in May 2020 and a fire in November 2020. Lincoln Park residents have long monitored bad smells, questionable dust, and other concerns associated with this operation and organized to get this threat to their health and safety out of their neighborhood. So we believe that Southeast Side residents have good reason to be concerned. We stand in solidarity with 10th Ward residents in saying that if it isn't good enough for Lincoln Park, it isn't good enough for the predominantly Latino and African-American 10th Ward.

We see this as a great opportunity for the City of Chicago to go back to the drawing board and create environmentally just policies that uplift our overburdened communities. Again, we respectfully request that CDPH deny the permit to operate a large recycling facility in the 10th Ward.

Sincerely,



Juanita Irizarry
Executive Director