

DEPARTMENTAL ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE ACTION PLAN

CITY OF CHICAGO'S GOAL: *Take a whole-government approach to improve and protect the environment, health, and quality of life in environmental justice (EJ) communities through changes to internal policies, processes, practices and/or budgets.*

| ENVIROMENTAL JUSTICE ACTION PLAN |
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| Department Name – Action Name: DPD – Industrial Zoning Amendments |
| Department Scope and Authorities: Chapter 17 of the Municipal Code, commonly known as the Chicago Zoning Ordinance, is “adopted for the purpose of...promoting the public health, safety, and general welfare; preserving the quality of life for visitors and residents; retaining and expanding the city’s industrial base; maintaining orderly and compatible land use and development patterns; encouraging environmentally responsible development practices; and, accommodating growth and development that complies with the preceding stated purposes” (MCC § 17-1-1500) and “[t]he Zoning Administrator is responsible for administering and enforcing the provisions of this Zoning Ordinance” (MCC §§ 17-14-0202). The Zoning Administrator is also responsible for reviewing “each proposed text amendment application” and forwarding “a recommendation on the proposal to the City Council Committee on Zoning, Landmarks and Building Standards before the Committee’s public hearing. The recommendation of the Zoning Administrator must also be forwarded to the City Council when the report of the City Council Committee on Zoning is initially submitted to the City Council.” (MCC §§ 17-13-0202). This authority also extends to zoning map amendment applications, both those proposed outside of (MCC §§ 17-13-0305) or within (MCC §§ 17-13-0400) Industrial Corridors or as part of Planned Developments (MCC §§ 17-13-0603). |
| Environmental Justice Strategy: Propose updated zoning regulations, such as the alteration or elimination of permitted-by-right or special use status for manufacturing, recycling, waste-related, and other intensive industrial land uses in Commercial, Manufacturing and Planned Manufacturing zoning districts. Currently, Section 17-9-0117-G of the Zoning Ordinance, commonly known as the Air Quality Ordinance, which was approved by the Chicago City Council in February 2021, mandates internal reviews by the City Departments of Public Health and Transportation, along with public review of submitted materials and a community meeting, prior to any formal analysis by the Department of Planning and Development and the Office of the Zoning Administrator, pursuant to MCC §§ 17-13-0800. To supplement those requirements, additional restrictions on allowed uses, or the ability for certain land uses to be pursued by-right, will be proposed. This will require action by the Chicago City Council to modify use matrixes of the Zoning Ordinance and will eliminate or require greater oversight to certain intensive industrial uses, as identified in MCC §§ 17-9-0117-G. |
| Supporting Department(s): Public Health, Transportation, and Planning and Development |
| Impact Measures: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Modification of the Chicago Zoning Ordinance to reflect alteration of structure of allowed uses in the manufacturing and planned manufacturing zoning districts.• Data sharing with City Departments of Public Health and Transportation, along with interested community members, regarding proposed operations and intensity.• Community meeting whereby the applicant is required to explain the project and hear (if not also address) community concerns and questions.• Maintenance of a publicly accessible website to track projects. |

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Related Department Investments & Prior Commitments:

The City Departments of Public Health, Transportation, and Planning and Development currently apply the aforementioned Air Quality Ordinance to the most intensive industrial land uses available in the City. This proposal would expand the list of potentially eligible uses while also increasing the legislative process to establish such uses so as to ensure greater public oversight of the potential projects.

Action Steps

Draft of legislative changes to reflect the above-mentioned land use changes and extend the Air Quality Ordinance to newly restricted industrial activities.

Timeline

Phase 1:
Q3 - Q4 2023

Status

Drafted, pending discussions with aldermanic and administration representatives

Community Input & Response

Community Input:

Unspecified “changes to City zoning and planning practices”; stricter adherence to public health and environmental justice strategies; and, increases both in quality and quantity of community engagement.

Response to Community Input:

While the degree of zoning changes to diminish, if not eliminate, by right opportunities is already proposed, further internal discussions had already suggested that greater opportunities for community involvement and awareness of proposals and their reviews could be highlighted, especially in the yet to be designated environmental justice communities.