

River Ecology & Governance Task Force

June 3, 2025 3:00 PM – 4:30 PM

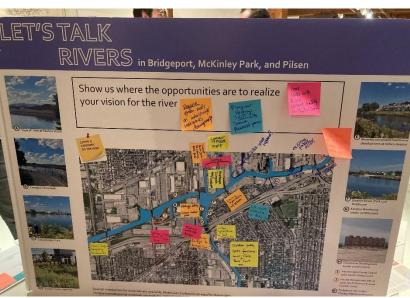
Agenda

- 3:05 Task Force Short-Term Objectives and Goals
- 3:10 South Branch Framework Planning Initiative
- 3:30 Discussion and Q & A
- 3:40 Government Partner Project Updates
- 4:10 Reminders, Upcoming Summer Events, and Participation Opportunities
- 4:20 Adjourn and 2025 Task Force Meeting Dates









- Established through an executive order in 2019
- Forum for river specific issues discussion, project coordination, and feedback
- Covers all riverfronts within the City limits (Calumet and Chicago River systems)
- Co-managed by the City's Department of Planning and Development, Metropolitan Planning Council, and Friends of the Chicago River

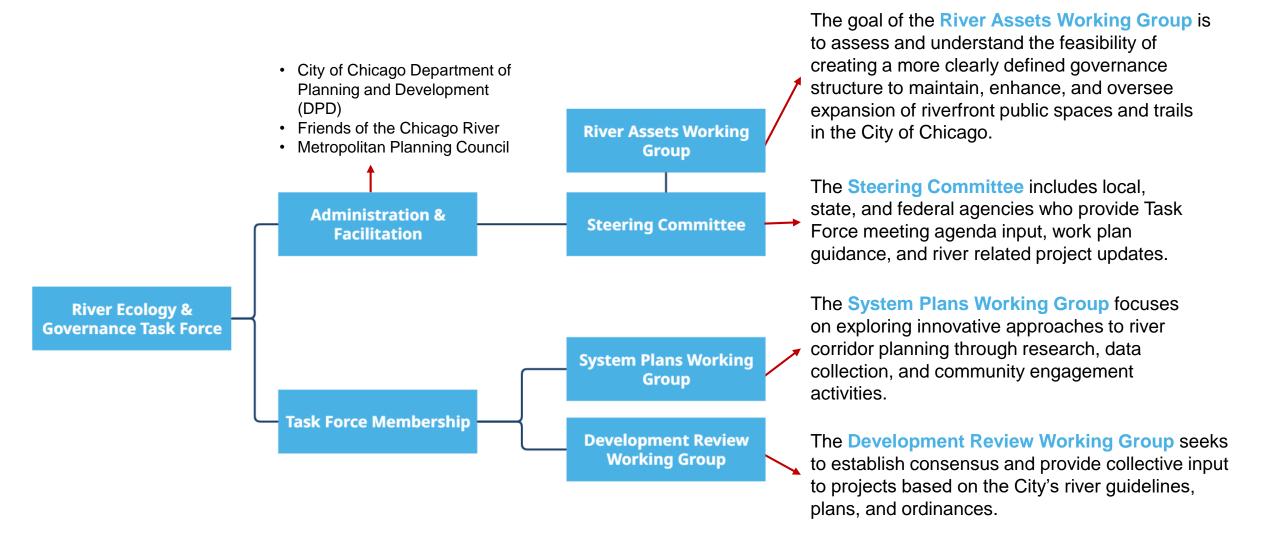
City of Chicago: River Ecology & Governance Task Force

River Ecology and Governance Task Force Objectives

Transforming Chicago's unique waterway system into a **thriving and ecologically integrated natural asset**, capable of accommodating the needs of people, requires **coordinated planning**, investment and management.

Aspire to, and realize no later than 2040, inland waterways in Chicago that are inviting, productive and living, that support wildlife in-stream and on their banks, and that contribute to our city's resiliency

River Ecology and Governance Task Force Current Structure Diagram



Task Force Work Plan for 2025 +

Goal #1: Create recommendations to inform river-related policies, plans, and projects to advance collective priorities.

Goal #2: Leverage Task Force and community expertise to help advance future river investment priorities.

Goal #3: Work collaboratively with agencies to improve river asset governance and management methods.

Goal #4: Ensure process for river development reviews is followed and continues to improve new riverfront developments.

SOUTH BRANCH FRAMEWORK

PRESENTATION TO THE RIVER ECOLOGY & GOVERNANCE TASK FORCE

DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT COMMISSIONER CIERE BOATRIGHT



Site Overview

Ward: 11th – Lee, 12th – Ramirez

Community: Bridgeport, Chinatown, McKinley Park

Region: Southwest

Purpose: To consolidate planning for the South Branch of the

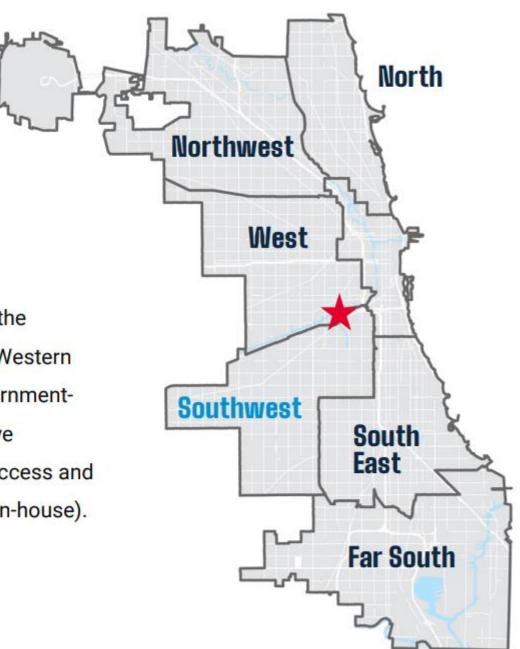
Chicago River, from Ping Tom Memorial Park to Western

Avenue, and integrate past community- and government-

identified recommendations into a comprehensive

strategy and implementation plan for riverfront access and

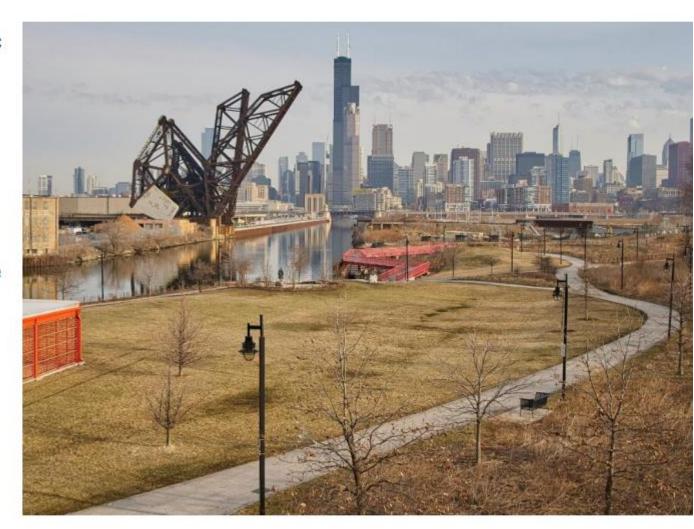
improvements. Work will be completed by DPD (In-house).



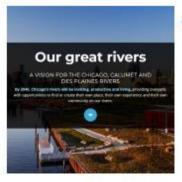


A Call for Action

- Our river system is a vital natural and economic asset that has shaped the city's growth.
- Accessible rivers can enhance adjacent communities and foster economic and sustainable development.
- Over the years several planning studies and recommendations have been developed for the South Branch, but this work has not always been aligned or clear implementation paths identified.
- A comprehensive strategy can foster the implementation of access and other improvements to promote a more vibrant and environmentally resilient landscape.



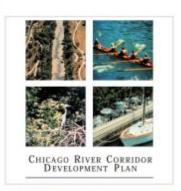
Past Plans and Studies



Our great rivers
Great Rivers Chicago
City of Chicago, MPC, CMAP,
Friends of the Chicago River

1999

2016



Chicago River Corridor Development Plan Department of Planning and Development

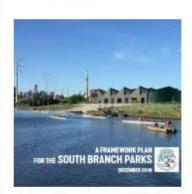


CHICAGO RIVER
DESIGN GUIDELINES

Chicago River Design Guidelines
Department of Planning and
Development

2018

2019



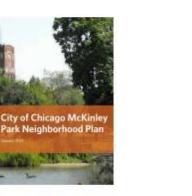
A framework for the South Branch Parks South Branch Park Advisory Council



Chicago River Edge Access Study Chicago Department of Transportation (CDOT)

2021

2023



McKinley Park Neighborhood Plan McKinley Park Development Council

2024



South Branch Connectivity Project McKinley Park Development Council

Study Goals

1

2

3

GATHER

ANALYZE & SYNTHESIZE

CONSOLIDATE

Past plans, studies, and existing conditions information.

Demographics, future growth, land use, zoning, vacant land, environmental remediation, policies, legislative frameworks, project proposals. Align and articulate an implementation plan to guide the City and its partners.



Scope Details

1

Review Past Plans and Studies

Comparative Analysis

Proposed projects and recommendations over the years

Ongoing Coordination

Working sessions with relevant sister agencies and aldermanic offices, as necessary 2

Existing Conditions

Mapping and Spatial Analysis

Demographics
Riverfront infrastructure
Public realm and open space
Transportation access
Land use + zoning

3

Strategies and Alignment

Synthesis
Past plans and studies
Existing conditions analysis

Implementation and Phasing

DPD role + next steps



Next Steps

Chicago Plan Commission

Informational Presentation – 04/17/25

Existing Conditions

Mapping and spatial analysis

Socialization

City Partners + Community orgs.

REGTF Informational

Strategies and Alignment

Implementation and Phasing

MAR

APR

MAY

JUN

Past Plans and Studies

Comparative analysis

Existing Conditions

Mapping and analysis

Existing Conditions

Mapping and spatial analysis

Strategies and Alignment

Chicago Plan Commission Adoption

Fall 2025



Given the amount of community engagement completed by previous studies, how would this group like to be engaged?



Are there any missing topics, items or discussions from your area of expertise that you think should be incorporated?



Are there any planning initiatives or other information we should be aware of that your organization is sponsoring or would like to share?



Is there anything else that you would like to share?



Thank you!







MWRD Robbins Flood Control Project

Project Update

June 3, 2025



14-253-5F, Robbins Stormwater Project History

History:

- A preliminary study began in 2014 to determine the best approach to address Robbins Flooding and address properties required.
- Cook County Land Bank Authority (CCLBA) was brought on to acquire tax delinquent properties within the project area in 2017
- Preliminary Design was completed in 2018
- The Intergovernmental Agreement was signed for Design-Build Services between the Village of Robbins and the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago (MWRDGC) in July 2019



Flood Benefits

100-yr Storm Event: Existing Conditions



100-yr Storm Event: Proposed Conditions





14-253-5F, Robbins Stormwater Project – Phase I

Project Scope:

Construction of a diversion channel (1,300 ft), installation of three 42-inch diameter pipe culverts (555 ft) at intersection of W. 135th St and S. Claire Blvd, construction of an access road on S. Woodlawn Ave and associated work.



Project Schedule:

- Award Date: April 2022
- Start of Construction: June 2022
- Substantial Completion: June 2024
- Ribbon Cutting: October 31, 2024
- Final Completion: December 2024





Project Scope:

Construction of a stormwater park (28.5 acft storage capacity), installation of a storm sewer along Midlothian Creek (1,120ft), streambank stabilization on Midlothian Creek, construction of a diversion channel (800ft), and 319 Grant work west of Kedzie Ave.

Project Schedule:

Award Date: July 11, 2024

Contract Start Date: July 25, 2024

Final Completion: January 2026





Stormwater Park, Preconstruction



Stormwater Park, April 2025

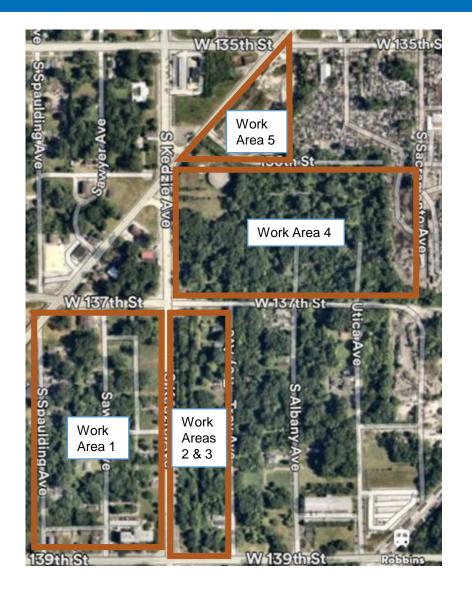




Phase 2 Construction

Construction of Phase 2 is proceeding in 5 main work areas:

- 1 West of Kedzie
- 2 Midlothian Creek, 139th to 137th
- 3 Kedzie Ave Storm Sewer
- 4 Stormwater Park
- 5 Diversion Channel

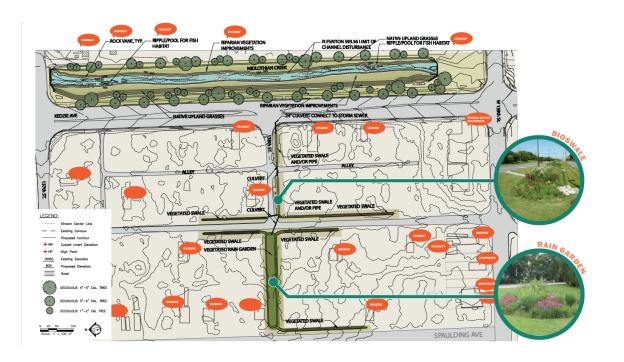




Work Area 1: West of Kedzie

Work Area 1 is located West of Kedzie, along 138th St, which includes the installation of a Rain Garden between Spaulding and Sawyer and vegetated swales along Sawyer and 138th St.

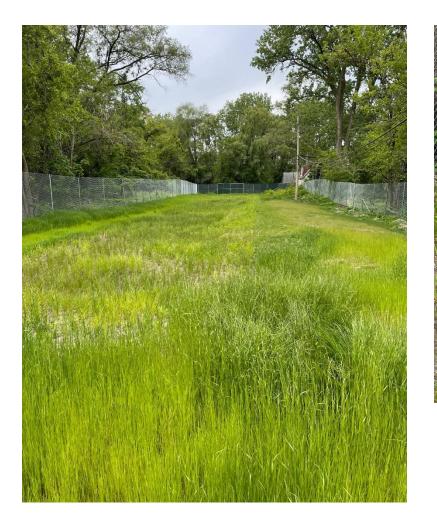
Work in this area was completed in December 2024, with some additional plantings scheduled for Summer 2025.





138th St Rain Garden, Looking West

138th St Bioswale, Looking West

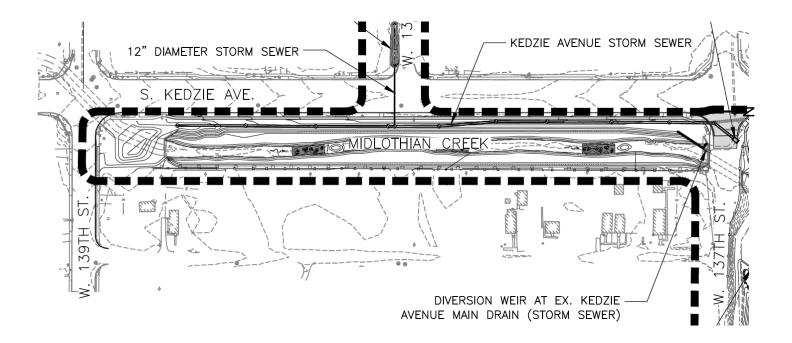






Work Area 2: Midlothian Creek 139th to 137th

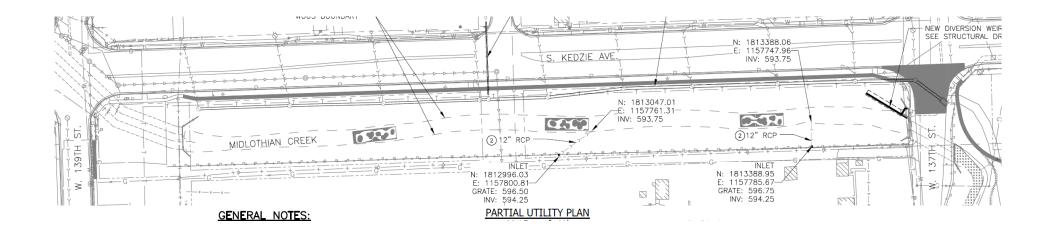
Work Area 2 is along the Midlothian Creek streambank between 139th St and 137th St. Vegetation was cleared to make way for stabilization work, which will include grading, erosion control blanketing, and planting of native plant species.





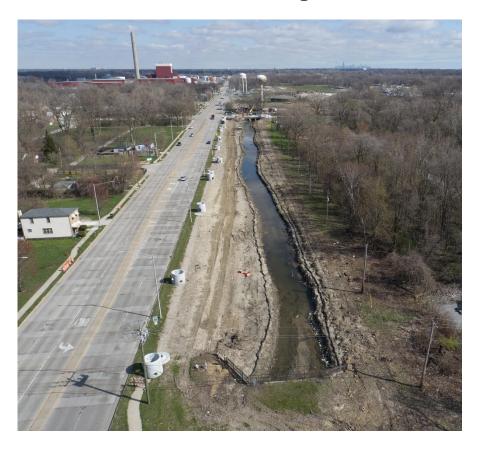
1. Work Area 3: Midlothian Creek Storm Sewer

2. Construction of a storm sewer and manholes east of Kedzie along Midlothian Creek from 139th St to 137th St, which will tie into the existing 84" Kedzie Ave storm sewer through a junction chamber.





Midlothian Creek Looking North



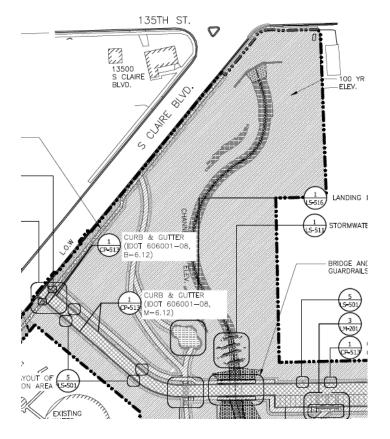
Midlothian Creek Looking South





Work Area 5: Diversion Channel

Work Area 5 is located North of the stormwater park, connecting the stormwater pond to the Phase 1 diversion channel. Channel Drop #2 has been installed and current work includes stone armoring work. Pending work includes installation of asphalt paths and landscaping work.







Work Area 4: Stormwater Park

Current work in the Stormwater Park area includes the installation of stone armoring along portions of the stormwater pond shoreline, landscaping work and installation of a low flow structure and channel drop #1.







Stormwater Park Stone Armoring Installation



Contech Bridge Assembly





1. Contact Information:

- 2. George Velez, P.E.
- 3. Senior Civil Engineer/Project Manager
 - 4. Stormwater Management
 - 5. (312) 751-5833
 - 6. VelezG@mwrd.org
 - 7. Dylan Cooney, P.E.
 - 8. Principal Civil Engineer
 - 9. (312) 751-4041
 - 10.CooneyD@mwrd.org

11.MWRDGC 12.111 E. Erie St., Chicago, IL 60611



The Hazel Johnson Cumulative Impacts Ordinance



What are Cumulative Impacts?

Cumulative impacts are the combination of environmental, health and social stressors that people experience in their daily lives.

Some communities are exposed to more stressors than others.



Image courtesy of Amy Heldman, Friends of the Chicago River

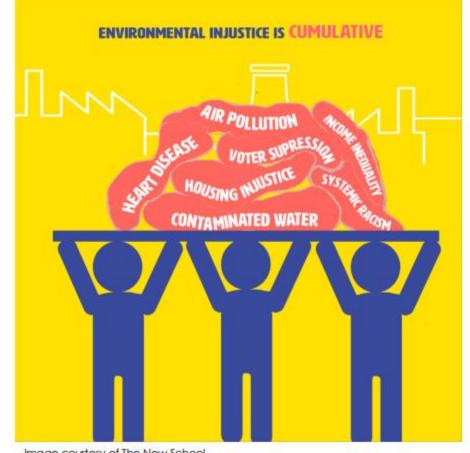


Image courtesy of The New School



Latine and Black Chicagoans have more of their neighborhoods zoned for heavy manufacturing

- Latine and Black Chicagoans are significantly more likely to have manufacturing within their neighborhoods and live in areas zoned for heavy industry (M3)
- 29% of land zoned for manufacturing in areas where most Latine Chicagoans live
- 23% of land zoned for manufacturing where most Black Chicagoans live

Types of manufacturing in most populous areas for each demographic

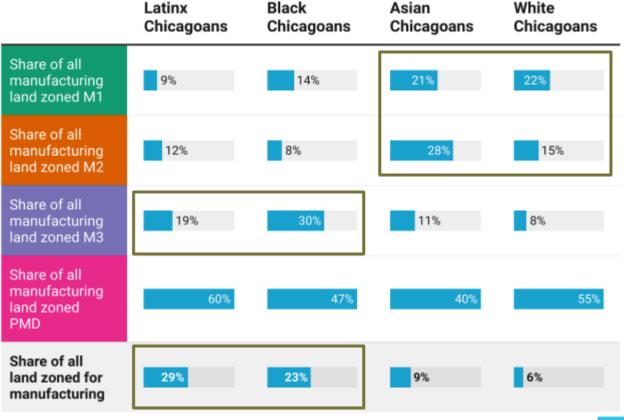
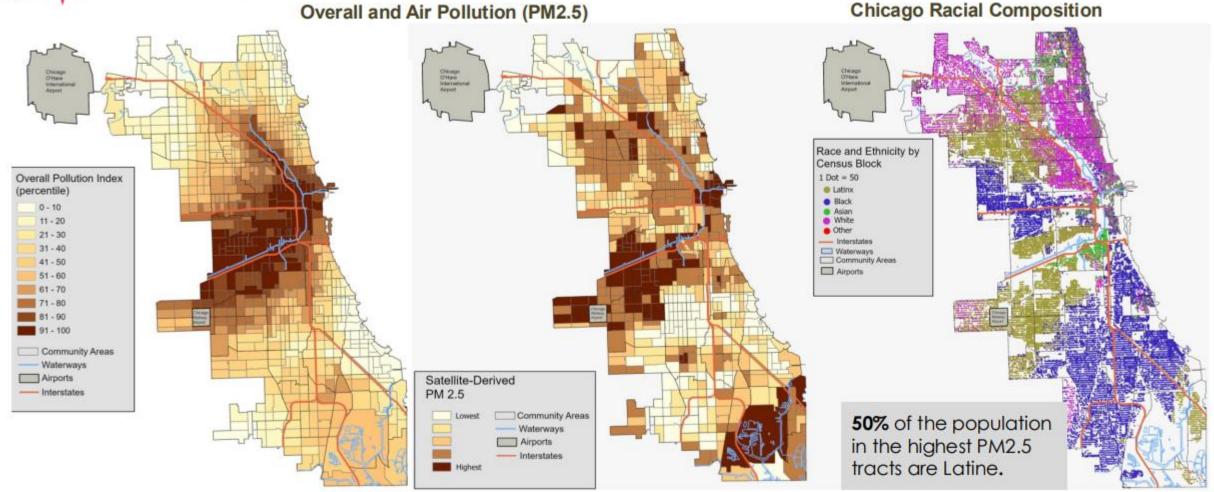


Diagram courtesy of The Metropolitan Planning Council



* Latine populations experience the most pollution



Maps courtesy of The Metropolitan Planning Council

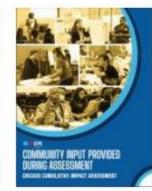


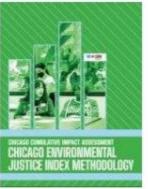
Cumulative Impact Assessment Summary

- Chicago's Cumulative Impact Assessment was co-led by community groups and the City to help identify neighborhoods that experience the greatest cumulative burden and inform decision-making around both policy and potential targeted investments the City should make.
- The Assessment includes:
 - Community Input Summaries
 - Chicago Environmental Justice Index and Map
 - City of Chicago Environmental Justice Action Plan
 - Cumulative Impacts Policy Recommendations













All Cumulative Impact Assessment reports are available at chicago.gov/cumulativeimpact



The Hazel Johnson Cumulative Impacts Ordinance - A Healthier and Safer Chicago

The Cumulative Impacts Ordinance will create an overall healthier Chicago. By modifying the zoning process, the Ordinance will reduce the amount of health-damaging pollution that residents across Chicago are exposed to. The Ordinance would do this by:

- √ Requiring intensive industrial facilities to conduct a cumulative **impact study** to assess potential environmental and health impacts.
- ✓These cumulative impact studies would be reviewed by a new board, the Environmental Justice (EJ) Advisory Board, and posted publicly on a City website.
- √ Requiring additional review for new and expanding intensive. industrial facilities to ensure that they are safe for the health of communities and the environment.





X EJ Advisory Board – Embodying Co-Governance

Ex-Officio Members:

- Commissioner of CDPH
- Commissioner of CDOT
- Chief Sustainability Officer
- Chair of the Committee on Environmental Protection and Energy

Non-governmental members are appointed by the Mayor:

- 10 members from environmental justice community areas
- 3 members from various non-profit organizations
- 1 public health expert
- 1 environment or climate expert
- 1 member from business community



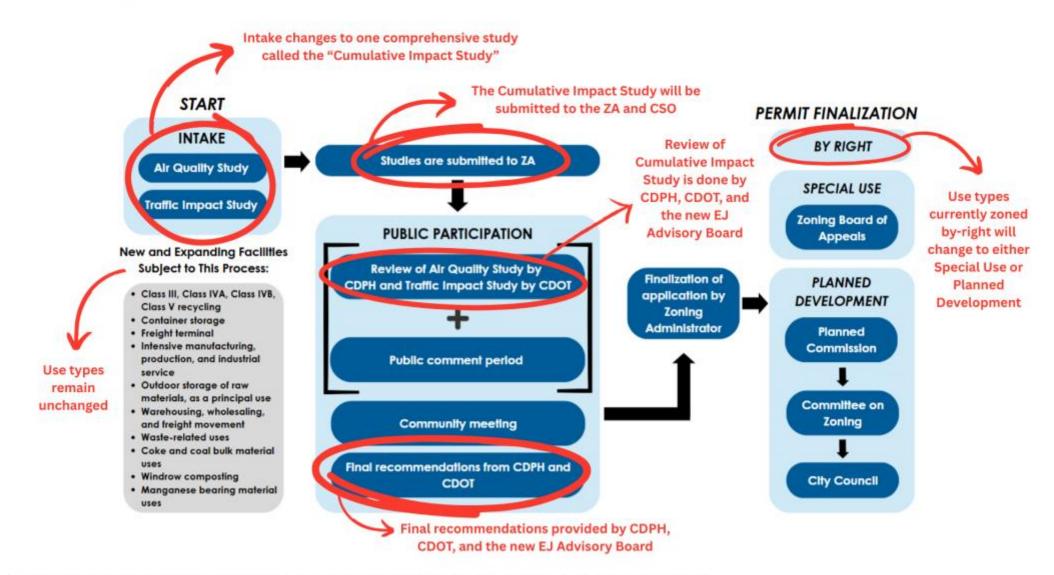


Functions of the EJ Advisory Board



- ✓ Provides suggestions and guidance on City plans and policies including the **Environmental Justice Action Plan**
- ✓ Advises the City on heavy industrial zoning decisions
- ✓ Works collaboratively with City departments to provide feedback and recommendations on environmental justice initiatives

Changes to the Current Zoning Review Process





Site Plan Mitigations

Prior to final site plan review, the City and developer align on a set of mitigation measure to address project impacts.

Examples of mitigations to reduce air pollution include:

- Paving unpaved areas of the site to further reduce fugitive dust emissions
- Monitoring emissions with data tracking
- Applying dust control applications throughout the site
- Utilizing street sweeping equipment on asphalted areas
- Adding a vegetative buffer around the site





Benefits of the Proposed Zoning Changes

- ✓ A clearer, more standard review process, at the time of zoning, for developers seeking permits.
- ✓ More expansive evaluation of the potential health and environmental impacts of proposed industrial sites.
- ✓ Greater protections for communities and workers disproportionately burdened by pollution.





QUESTIONS & FEEDBACK









Project Updates

Chicago Dept. of Planning and Development

- Calumet Design Guidelines and Land Use Update project team is in the process of developing draft recommendations. Broader public engagement is scheduled for the end of June.
- The Armitage Industrial Corridor Framework Plan was adopted in May. Industrial corridors for the next phase of work are still being identified.
- DPD, MWRD, Parks, FPDCC, and the IDNR are continuing to work with the USACE on developing the scope of a feasibility study which builds upon the Chicago Area Waterways Restoration Framework Plan.
- OPD is updating the 2003 Central Area Plan to create a 20-year implementation vision for equitable downtown growth. The second phase of the update is currently underway to gather input on strategies and actions that that will enable the city's Central Area to better serve residents, workers, visitors and businesses. A public open house will be held in late summer.

Chicago Dept. of Transportation

- South Branch Riverwalk design is in procurement stages. Anticipate NTP in Q3/Q4 2025.
- o Construction on Western Ave, Chicago Ave, and Division St bridges are all expected to start in 2025.

Chicago Dept. of the Environment and Dept. of Public Health

- May Rivers Task Force System Plans Working Group meeting focused on the City's update to the Green Stormwater Infrastructure strategy. Community meetings occurring throughout May and June.
- Hazel Johnson Cumulative Impacts Ordinance was introduced in City Council in April. It is currently in the Rules Committee.

Project Updates

- Forest Preserve District of Cook County
 - Along Calumet River:
 - Beaubien Woods restroom construction underway and to be completed by 9/2026. The accessible boat launch to open in July; Paddling events scheduled for June 19, 20, and July 13.
 - Whistler Woods riverbank restoration project, including installation of seating area, being explored with Friends of the Chicago River and NOAA.
 - Little Calumet Boat Launch targeted for improvements in 2027
 - Fall paddling events from Kickapoo launch on Oct. 4 and 24.

Along North Branch River:

- North Branch canoe launch sites continue to be reviewed for ecological impacts prior to moving ahead with proposed improvements.
- Chick Evans dam removal status: On-going discussions with IDNR re. cost sharing, subject to decision on golf course bridge that it supports. Willow Road canoe/kayak launch improvements are on hold due to delays in Chick Evans dam removal.

Project Updates

Chicago Park District

- Ribbon cutting for Park 571 on 6/14 at 10:30 am.
- River Park canoe/kayak lockers are now open for registration.
- Restoration of the Wentworth connector now complete. Natural area was replaced within Ping Tom Park as a part of the project.
- REI is out as a vendor at Ping Tom boathouse but a new vendor has moved in.
- River Day was a massive success across the Park District. Too many sites to list, but Thank You to those that helped support.

Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago

Biological monitoring, with fish collections starting in June.

REGTF – River Questions Google Form

 Reminder - New form for directing river related questions:

https://forms.gle/TB6m2Cocpm YdBgew6



Do you have a question for the facilitators and/or government partners of the City of Chicago River Ecology and Governance Task Force?

Please complete the below form to submit your question, comment, or suggestion. The purpose of this form is to provide a way for REGTF participants to submit questions and/or discussion topics that were not covered as part of our regular workshops. Friends of the Chicago River and the Metropolitan Planning Council (the REGTF co-facilitators) will work to direct your river related questions to the appropriate contact to receive an answer and/or will include the topic in future meeting agendas. To help us in this task, please be as concise as possible in your questions and limit each submission to one topic.

Upcoming Summer Events and Engagement Opportunities

City of Chicago's Green Infrastructure Strategy (GSI) Public Meetings:

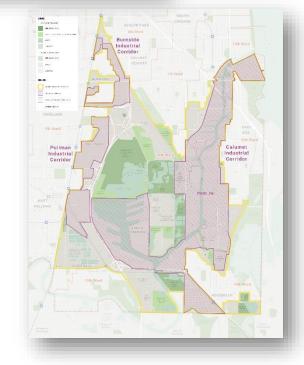
- June 4th 6:00 8:00 pm at McKinley Park, Nathanael Greene Elementary School
- June 10th 6:00 8:00 pm at West Garfield Park" Build Inc.

Calumet Area Land Use Plan and Guidelines Public Meetings:

- June 28th 10:00 am 1:00 pm at Altgeld Family Resource Center
- Virtual meetings planned on July 15th and 17th







Upcoming Summer Events and Engagement Opportunities

Bridgehouse Museum Speaker Series

- 5:15 6:15 pm at 99 Chicago Riverwalk
- June 26, July, 10, July 24, August 7, August 21

Beaubien Woods Celebration

June 14th 11:00 – 3:00 pm

Wild Mile Summer Events

- June 5 (Film Screening), June 8 (Music), June 11 (Walking Tour)







2025 Task Force Meeting Dates

Quarterly Meetings: 3:00 – 4:30 pm

- September 16th
- December 9th

System Plans Working Group: 1:00 – 2:00 pm

- August 20th
- November 19th

