

Environment, Climate, and Energy: Meeting #2

August 10, 2021, 6:00PM | 2 hours

Documented by: Maggie Macpherson


MEETING MATERIALS

[Agenda](#)

[Presentation](#)

ATTENDEES

- Marissa Strassel
- Frank Zhu
- Grant Ullrich
- Melissa Tate
- Anne Nicklin
- Anthony Tindall
- Arlinda Bajrami
- Bob Megquier
- Brad Roback
- Brian Daly
- Iyana Simba
- Kaycee Mendoza
- Kimberly Worthington
- Kuldip Kumar
- Martha Torrez Allen
- Matt F.
- Michele Davies
- Mike Tomas
- Naomi Davis
- Rob Weinstock
- Rohit
- Sean Wiedel
- Tomi Moore
- Tomás de'Medici
- Kyra Woods

 Environment, Climate and Energy Pillar

PHASE I WORKING DEFINITION:



We Will's Environment, Climate and Energy pillar is intended to address the impact of weather and climate conditions on Chicago, along with the energy and environmental resources that can help residents and businesses to mitigate their impact from season to season and year to year.

MEETING GOAL

Break the ice between participants, set group norms and priorities, and collectively reflect upon environmental injustice in Chicago.

WHERE WE ARE

Step 1

We Are*Setting the Stage*

Step 2

We Have and Need*Develop A Policy Toolkit*

Step 3

We Will*Set Policy Framework***KEY TAKEAWAYS**

- 1 | There is a stated commitment among participants to understand and reckon with systemic environmental injustice. That equity lens will inform future meetings and policy recommendations.
- 2 | We Will Chicago organizers are looking to recent plans in Boston and New York City as guides.
- 3 | Participants noted discrepancies between the priorities of Phase 1 and the full reality of environmental needs in Chicago, which include labor relations and a focus on lived experiences, not just infrastructural improvements.

CONVERSATION HIGHLIGHTS

"I think about reckoning as being ostentatious and bold and actually shooting for what we want, not just what we think we can get."

Anne Nicklin | Rebuilding Exchange

"What thought, plans, or commitments have been made for implementing [the We Will Chicago plan], financing it, managing its execution? So it's not just one of those pretty reports."

Naomi Davis | Blacks in Green, Founder

"Once you start to work in this space, you see how bureaucratic it is...I see a lot of exhaustion as a result of this historical reckoning. And I think that's intentional."

Tomás de'Medici | TdM Emerald Consulting, Principal

"We also need to discuss bridging the gap between labor and environmental justice—that's a big issue for our group and probably many others here."

Martha Torrez Allen | Southeast Environmental Task Force

"Law is designed to stop change. I think it's important to think about this in this group...We will need to confront those roadblocks and go around them, if we can't go right through them."

Rob Weinstock | The University of Chicago Law School, Assistant Clinical Professor of Law

NOTES

Kickoff and Introductions

- Marissa Strassel (MUSE Community + Design) opened the session by inviting attendees to consider the neighborhoods that they grew up in. “In what ways did you and your fellow community members experience joy?”
- Lesley (MUSE Community + Design) ran through the meeting agenda. This is the second meeting of the Environment, Climate, and Energy pillar, and the team is still getting to know each other and establish their goals. To explain what the end goal of the We Will process will look like, Lesley points to the Boston 2030 and the OneNYC 2050 plans as inspiration.

She explained that each of the seven We Will pillars will produce a final report that reflects the following stages:

- “We Are” (current policy/asset assessment)
- “We Have and Need” (developing a policy tool kit)
- “We Will” (making policy recommendations) stages.

There will also be a synthesis report that spans the pillars.

Participants then asked questions about their role as a working group in this process. Anne Nicklin of the Rebuilding Exchange asked, “are we allowed to add more to this [process]? Or are we just following a question-and-response guideline?”

“What thought, plans, or commitments have been made for implementing [the plan], financing it, managing its execution? So it’s not just one of those pretty reports,” asked Naomi Davis, of Blacks in Green.

Lesley emphasized that “we want to be aspirational at this point and really think about what can have the impact...before we decide the budget.” There is no definitive time horizon for the We Will plan at this time.

Overview

- To help group members get to know each other and establish expectations for future meetings, Marissa conducted a live poll using Menti. Poll questions were:
 - “Describe your most successful meeting experience: what about the group dynamics or meeting facilitation made it a great experience?”
 - Some of the anonymous responses included: “Space for discussion of assumptions/starting points” and “Build in time for genuine dialogues between participants”
- A follow-up question asked: “Describe your least successful meeting experience: what about the group dynamics or meeting facilitation made it an unpleasant experience?”
- After the polling, the team moved to the online whiteboard platform Miro so that everyone could input their working styles and individual strengths into a group-accessible interactive map. There were some technical difficulties for those not familiar with Miro (“This platform is overwhelming,” wrote Anthony Tindall, of the Forest Preserves of Cook County, in the chat, where others agreed). After a few minutes, most members got the hang of it.
- The group then ran through some pre-established group norms for the committee, which are:
 - We will be aware of power and privilege and agree to share it

- We will embrace different communication styles, especially ones farther apart from your own
 - We will be mindful of speaking time to avoid a few people dominating a meeting
 - We will listen with an open mind
 - We will give and receive feedback, critiques, and questioning
 - We will seek multiple points of view and solutions that bring about equity
 - We will check for diversity gaps (who is missing) and propose solutions
 - We will assume good intent, but own our impact
 - We will respect this space a place to work candidly during the process
 - We will hold ourselves accountable to our commitments
 - We will ensure transparency in our process and outcomes
 - We will not use this opportunity for business development or sales
 - We will have only one representative participate in a meeting, and we will try our best to have the designated representatives attend as many meetings as possible to ensure consistency
- Marissa then prompted participants to reflect upon the “historical reckoning” happening in Chicago and around the country. “We want to reflect on this past and reclaim the present and reimagine the future. But we can’t do that until we take a step back and recognize the injustices that have happened.” The prompts she asked participants to consider: 1) How are you making sense of historical reckoning? 2) How are you making sense of historical reckoning in your work? 3) How is historical reckoning connected to the pillar of Environment, Climate, and Energy
 - Some participant responses:
 - “Well, I’ll tell you the thing that’s profoundly annoying for a lot of Black people...[systemic injustice] wasn’t accidental, it was intended,” said Naomi Davis, of Blacks in Green. She expressed exhaustion with systemic racism and environmental injustice being framed as the unintended or surprise consequences of planning and policies.
 - “Once you start to work in this space, you see how bureaucratic it is... I see a lot of exhaustion, as a result of this historical reckoning. And I think that’s intentional,” said Tomás de’Medici, of TdM Emerald Consulting.
 - “I guess what makes me sad is the loss of ‘what could have been’ through these actions...we can get out of this fast, and we need to get out of this fast. We can change the path,” said Bob Megquier, of Openlands.
 - “I think about reckoning as being ostentatious and bold and actually shooting for what we want, not just what we think we can get,” said Anne Nicklin, of Rebuilding Exchange.
 - “Law is designed to stop change. I think it’s important to think about this in this group...we will need to confront those roadblocks and go around them, if we can’t go right through them,” added Rob Weinstock, of the University of Chicago Law School. He also spoke about the [exhaustion doctrine](#) as an often-used legal instrument to block accountability.
- Lesley then gave an overview of the pre-planning, community conversation phase and Phase 1 of the We Will process when they established the seven pillars. The Phase 1 working definition of the Environment, Climate, and Energy pillar is: “We Will’s Environment, Climate, and Energy pillar is intended to address the impact of weather and climate conditions on Chicago, along with the energy and environmental resources that can help residents and businesses to mitigate their impact from season to season and year to year.”
 - The priority areas established in Phase 1 are:
 - Community accessible green solutions
 - Green infrastructure
 - Workforce development
 - Walkable wards
 - Environmental justice

Agenda

- Recording Consent + Reflective Prompt
- Meet the Co-chairs + Agenda Review + Examples of End Product
- Group Norms Activity
- Strengths and Working Styles Activity
- Historical Reckoning Framework Discussion
- Planning Process and Context Presentation
- Introduction to Phase 1 Priority Topic Areas
- Close-out and Homework

RESOURCES

We Will Chicago

<https://wewillchicago.com>

Environment, Climate and Energy Pillar E

<https://wewillchicago.com/environment-climate-and-energy>

Imagine Boston 2030

<https://www.boston.gov/civic-engagement/imagine-boston-2030>

ONENYC 2050

<https://onenyc.cityofnewyork.us>

NEXT STEPS

- Before the next session, participants will add comments to the Miro board about the priority topic areas and guiding questions for future sessions.