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Environment, Climate & Energy, Meeting #4

September 21 2021, 6:00 PM | 2 hours

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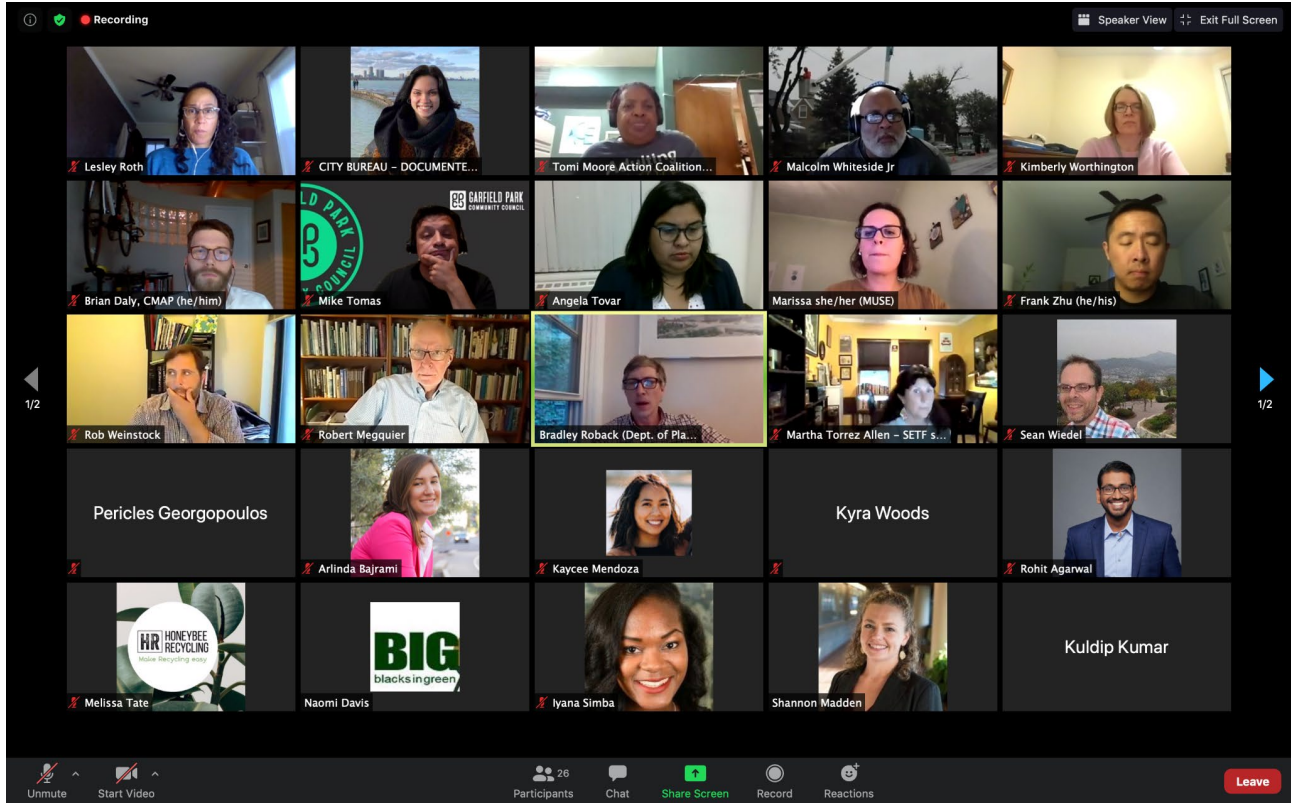
MEETING MATERIALS

[Agenda <Link to Agenda>](#)

[Presentation <Link to presentation>](#)

ATTENDEES

- Marissa Strassel
- Lesley Roth
- Sean Wiedel
- Angela Tovar
- Arlinda Bajrami
- Bradley Roback
- Naomi Davis
- Stephanie Katsaros
- Brian Daly
- Frank Zhu
- Kaycee Mendoza
- Kimberly Worthington
- Kyra Woods
- Malcom Whiteside Jr
- Mike Tomas
- Iyana Simba
- Kuldip Kumar
- Pericles Georgopoulos
- Robert Megquier
- Tomi Moore
- Rohit Agarwal
- Melissa Tate
- Rob Weinstock
- Martha Torrez Allen
- Shannon Madden
- Tomas de'Medici



The image shows a Zoom meeting interface with a grid of 25 participants. The participants are arranged in a 5x5 grid. The top row includes Lesley Roth, CITY BUREAU - DOCUMENTE..., Tomi Moore Action Coalition..., Malcolm Whiteside Jr, and Kimberly Worthington. The second row includes Brian Daly, CMAP (he/him), Mike Tomas, Angela Tovar, Marissa she/her (MUSE), and Frank Zhu (he/his). The third row includes Rob Weinstock, Robert Megquier, Bradley Roback (Dept. of Pla..., Martha Torrez Allen - SETF s..., and Sean Wiedel. The fourth row includes Pericles Georgopoulos, Arlinda Bajrami, Kaycee Mendoza, Kyra Woods, and Rohit Agarwal. The fifth row includes Melissa Tate, Naomi Davis, Iyana Simba, Shannon Madden, and Kuldip Kumar. The interface includes a 'Recording' indicator at the top left, 'Speaker View' and 'Exit Full Screen' options at the top right, and a bottom toolbar with 'Unmute', 'Start Video', 'Participants' (26), 'Chat', 'Share Screen', 'Record', 'Reactions', and 'Leave' buttons.

MEETING GOAL

The primary goal of this meeting was to hear the Steering Committee report out, follow up on the discussion of the pillar definition and guiding questions, review overarching and pillar-specific trends, reintroduce the Health and Racial Equity Impact Assessment (HREIA) and discuss how it serves this process.

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

The group struggled a bit to come to an agreement on the questions because of the overarching issues that fall under this pillar and the inherently separate solutions they require. However, by the end of the meeting, there was a more clear consensus that this stage is intended to be more broad and the future objectives will have more specific nuances to cover all the issues under this pillar.

2

The group believes that it's key to not only identify what parts of the city have historically been under resourced, but also those that have not in order identify what might need maintenance or where could potentially lose some resources and still function as normal.

3

Disproportionate death or infection rates during COVID-19 have underlined many of the trends that were identified, and have exacerbated the negative impacts from pollution exposure in Latinx and Black communities.

CONVERSATION HIGHLIGHTS

“This is a great instance where we need equitable treatment—not equal treatment.”

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

“The underserved communities will also be responsible for contributing to the offset expenses but may not be able to seize the incentives/rebates or be aware of the future jobs in energy. This is the reason the equitable distribution of resources must have a call-out for underserved communities.”

Melissa Tate | Ferrara Candy Company, LEED Green Associate

“This is not new information—we're talking about it in new ways, and that's better than a sharp stick in the eye [...] I want to see what we're going to do to actually level the playing field, [...] Are we doing that? Are Black and brown communities first in line? We just want to talk about and acknowledge the harm and do nothing about it—unacceptable.”

Naomi Davis | Blacks in Green, CEO

“We should acknowledge that avoidance is a really important tool moving forward. Arguably no industry that is invited into the city of Chicago should be a polluting industry.”

Bob Megquier | Openlands, Executive Vice President

“Yes, we want to use the equitable distribution of resources for corporations to extend responsibilities, but we should also use it as an opportunity to invest in the communities that have been historically disinvested in and impacted by this, [...] the ‘green renaissance’ should bring a lot of opportunities for new jobs. This wealth of opportunity shouldn't just bring opportunities to the Amazons of the world, especially when addressing the themes of historical reckoning.”

Frank Zhu | Guidehouse, State and Local Government Senior Consultant

NOTES

Kickoff and Introductions

- “How have historical inequities impacted the environment, climate and energy in your neighborhood?” Marissa Strassel, the pillar meeting’s host, asked the group.
- “The Chicago Department of Health has warehouses full of health data that document the kinds of respiratory and other damage that’s done. I mean, I don’t know what more to say other than the evidence is in,” said Naomi Davis.
- “I grew up in a part of the city that unfairly benefitted, so my experience is very different from the experiences of others in this group. I want to point out that there are parts of the city that benefited from these not being equitable, and I want to acknowledge that as well,” said Pericles Georgopoulos.
- “When people from communities that didn’t experience that harm come, they’re like, ‘Wait a minute, why is it like this?’” Naomi Davis said.
- “Living on the Southwest Side, we still see the industrial past of this area in the city. There are a lot of distribution facilities (Amazon, Target, etc) around here with their diesel traffic, unfairly burdening these neighborhoods. Even today, we see industrial lots on the river on the North Side receiving residential or commercial developments (such as Lincoln Yards and Morton Salt), but it’s a different story on the South Side,” said Rohit Agarwal.
- “Areas that have a disproportionate amount of industrial pollution also have had higher rates of Covid deaths,” Martha Torrez Allen said.
- “I think Rohit’s point about redevelopment on industrial lots on the North Side is really important. Inequity affecting the environment is not just a question of which places saw disinvestment and which didn’t—it’s also a question of which areas receive reinvestment. I live in the South Loop, where there was historically plenty of heavy infrastructure and industrial land use, but those places have mostly been redeveloped or remediated. They don’t stay vacant long, unlike in many neighborhoods further south and west,” said Brian Daly (CMAP).

Overview

- The pillar definition they’re currently working with is: “We Will’s Environment, Climate and Energy pillar is intended to address the impact of pollution and climate change in Chicago, along with energy and environmental resources and environmental justice principles to help residents and businesses mitigate and protect against negative impacts,” according to the presentation.
 - The original definition was: “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.”
- “Today we’re going to work on getting some additional feedback, getting consensus,” Marissa Strassel said. “Then we’ll delve into the nuances of the solutions to create a detailed and tangible policy framework.”

- Honey Pot Performance will be hosting events this fall specifically surrounding the pillars. More about this in meeting #7.

We Will Chicago Process Overview

- “We’re trying to balance moving forward and achieving what we set out to do while giving the experts in the room time to process,” said one of the hosts, Marissa Strassel (MUSE). “Because this project is so monumental, we, right beside you, are figuring out the best way to structure this process.”
- “We engaged over 600 Chicagoans in a series of community conversations and workshops, and out of those conversations came the pillars and topic areas,” Marissa Strassel said.
- Phase II Public Engagement Channels:
 - Sept.-Oct.: Artist/organizer engagements
 - Oct.-Dec.: Community partner engagement events, Virtual Forums, Website and Surveys
 - Piloting Oct- Dec: Meeting in a box
- Steering Committee Report: “Last time that we met we had the opportunity to share out to the group, it’s also an opportunity for us to hear from the other pillars. We have talked to this group about how intersectional the environmental pillar is with the others. [...] People are really cognizant of that,” said Angela Tovar. “Folks on the Steering Committee are very aligned with what the folks on this committee are saying, that the original definition does not include a focus on environmental justice. [...] It does not fully acknowledge the legacy pollution issues or the ongoing pollution we have now.”
- “What you see in the Guiding Principles document, there are some updates that reflect that conversation; feedback from the Steering Committee and feedback that we’re heard from this meeting,” Angela Tovar said.
 - “Have we received an index of the advisors? I’d like to know what other minds, experts, leaders are being tapped to guide this process,” Naomi Davis asked.

Guiding questions and pillar definition discussion

- “Using the comments, we revised these guiding questions, so I did want to just take some time to go over those,” Marissa Strassel said. They cut down the list from 11 to six.
- “I know there’s a love-hate for Miro [online whiteboard tool],” Marissa Strassel said. “We’re **not** going to spend time on this call wordsmithing, but we do want your feedback in order to make these stronger.”
- “Even in the sticky notes and throughout the convo, we talk a lot about mitigation but one of the basic principles of environmental policy is first avoid, then minimize, then mitigate. I do think as we’ve talked a little bit today about accountability—corporate accountability in particular, the partnerships that are needed with other agencies—I would like to include avoiding and minimizing impacts from pollution, as well as mitigating historical pollution as you see in vacant lots all over the city of Chicago. Let’s talk about avoidance, too,” said Bob Megquier with Openlands.

- “May I say that some of our favorite companies, Amazon, [...] Those are polluting companies. They don’t have a smokestack, but [...] city policies with that in mind,” Naomi Davis said.
- “I almost feel like waste and comments about the circular economy should fall under there,” Frank Zhu said. “It’s not even about mitigation. What are ways to minimize waste that is dumped there and how do we do it in a way that doesn’t target certain communities, especially POCs. I’m thinking back to General Iron, how certain wards have higher concentrations of waste plants.”
- “There needs to be a stronger ordinance that will protect vulnerable communities such as the 10th Ward from dirty industry and pollution,” said Martha Torrez Allen (SETF).
- “I highly recommend that we all ground ourselves in self-transformation work, especially those aspiring to be white allies to ‘priority communities’ and those working in the city,” Naomi Davis said, recommending the group read *The History of White People* by Dr. Nell Irvin Painter of Princeton.
- “Maybe I’m bringing too much of a legal approach to it, but what we do to slow greenhouse gas emissions is really different from what we do with water quality and soil,” said Rob Weinstock.
 - The overall attitude of the group toward the fact that they’re using relatively broad or overarching questions covering multiple issues is because they think they will need different policies to approach them.
- “We should have a specific arena where we’re focusing on the underserved communities,” Melissa Tate said.
- “We have to be careful about greenwashing too ... companies like Ozinga and what they are trying to do in the 10th Ward is a good example,” said Martha Torrez Allen.
- Bob Megquier (Openlands) asked, “How does the work we’re doing now on the Miro board relate back to these five themes that the work is supposed to go back to? I’m struggling to sort of see the connection of how it all flows and builds.”
- “What our team will do is take those comments, synthesize them, and share them back with you,” Marissa Strassel explained.

Pillar Trends Overview

- This portion of the presentation is focused on looking at trends in data to “create objectives in the next step of this process as we dig into our guiding questions,” Lesley Roth said. They’re looking at both pillar-specific and overarching themes.
 - Redlining: Between 1935 and 1940, the Home Owners Loan Corporation (HOLC) assigned grades to residential neighborhoods that reflected “mortgage security.” Residents of Zones C and D (see map below with HOLC Appraisal grade), mostly Black and brown residents, were subjected to racist lending practices that blocked opportunities to obtain mortgages and build wealth. Black families in Chicago lost between \$3 billion and \$4 billion in wealth because of predatory housing contracts during the 1950s and 1960s.

- Segregation: A segregated city is a direct outcome of historic redlining and racism; Chicago is among the top five most segregated cities in the US. (See map with Race, Dot Density).
- “The negative result is lenders either not offering the loans at all, or offering predatory loans,” Lesley Roth said. “Many people lost their homes and this set off a cascade of disinvestment. You can see the maps are going to have some patterns,” she added.
 - Life expectancy: Racism and multi-generational barriers to economic and social capital have produced an 8.8 year Black/white life expectancy gap in Chicago.
 - In the city of Chicago there’s almost a 20 year gap between the neighborhoods with the highest and lowest life expectancy.
 - “Specifically and directly related to our pillar because many of the determinants of life expectancy are grounded in negative environmental impacts,” said Lesley Roth. “These neighborhoods, probably unsurprisingly, look similar,” she added. “There’s also a lack of mobility, which restricts economic opportunity.”
 - Population change: Loss of Black and brown residents in long established South and West Side communities. “Chicago saw a net loss of almost 100,000 Black residents, however, there has been some growth in the Black population downtown, on the Near South Side,” Roth explained. The white increase is having a negative impact on Latinx neighborhoods who are being forced further west; there is a decline of white population on the South and South West sides of the city. The Asian population has increased across the city, but noticeable decreases in Uptown.

Health & Racial Equity Impact Assessment (HREIA) Re-introduction

- “The conditions in which people live are shaped by laws and practices,” Roth said regarding the HREIA evaluation tool. “The HREIA supports operationalizing equity.”
- HREIA is a set of guiding questions and community-engaged process to: assess positive and negative health impacts that could result from a proposed plan, policy or project; understand potential equity impacts (benefits or burdens for communities most impacted by the decision); and develop recommendations to make the proposed plan, policy or project racially equitable and maximize the benefits and mitigate the threats or burdens.
- The HREIA development is guided by a 10-member community accountability committee in addition to the HREIA project team. Roth is going to get back to everyone with a list of members on the committee.
- “As we move through into phase three, it will be refined by the health and equity research development team and it will be overseen by the community development committee,” Roth explained. “The connection between health and the environment has to be understood to conceptualize how we develop the HREIA.”
- Example questions from the HREIA draft:
 - “What data (numbers and narrative) did you collect to inform this proposal? What disparities or strengths do the data reveal and what might be missing from the data?”

What are the anticipated health benefits and harms? How do you plan to minimize health harms and maximize health benefits?”

- “What are the benefits of this proposal and who will receive them? What are the burdens of this proposal and who will bear them?”
- “How will you be accountable to the key groups most impacted by this issue? How will the implementation and the outcomes of this proposal be evaluated, and how will system changes be maintained?”
- “I am interested to know how the banks which hold City of Chicago dollars on deposit are required to reconcile and meet the lending needs of Black Chicago residents and businesses—including our money managers. What are their hiring requirements and how do they invest our funds? ^P_{SEP} This falls into this category, yes?” Naomi Davis asked.
- “The City has leverage with labor unions, which recently proved very resistant to equity provisions in our much ballyhooed Climate Equity Jobs Act. How can this master planning process achieve a power shift in that realm?” Naomi Davis asked.
- The trends relevant to this pillar can be understood through one or more lenses:
 - Historical reckoning (how have past injustices contributed to the outcome?)
 - HREIA (How do policies and projects affect the quality of life and wellbeing of neighborhood residents)
 - Assets and opportunities (how can we build off present-day trends to improve outcomes?)

Pillar-specific trends:

- Environmental burden: Steering of polluting businesses to the same neighborhoods with large concentrations of Latinos and African Americans has a detrimental impact on these communities. Data illustrates this disparity (see map), and higher burdened neighborhoods are also correlated by lower incomes and educational attainment. Environmental justice policies should be considered in affected areas to decrease potential impact in the future.
- Industries and manufacturing are concentrated along corridors and utilize large sites, pollution disproportionately impacts communities on the West and South Sides of the city, investment in clean up and green, low impact technology focused employers could mitigate some of the historically negative impacts
- Open space and sustainability plan: The city maintains a database of open space and sustainability plans. Areas identified by sustainability plans include wildlife, river corridors, nature and lakefront areas. These areas also include sustainable industries, green infrastructure, open space planning and urban agriculture.
- Sustainable development has not been equitable across the city historically, resident quality of life is compromised for communities where sustainability is not prioritized, Opportunities for increased resilience policy and awareness of climate change could positively impact communities at risk.

- “Beyond using the data to inform our questions and discussion, I’m looking forward to discussing how we can use the data to create binding policies and accountability,” Rob Weinstock said. “How about no new permits issued in areas that already have more facilities than city average listed on the Toxics Release Inventory (one of the factors captured by the EJScreen tool used for that last map).”
- “Those doing business with the City should meet HREIA standards, such as ComEd, undergoing a renegotiation of its Municipal Franchise Agreement,” said Naomi Davis.
- When I worked in solar development, navigating the ethnic and racial dynamics of the communities where projects would be located and the history, collective memory and well deserved skepticism of the unions was a major issue to challenge and address. So from FEJA [Future Energy Jobs Act] to CEJA [Clean Energy Jobs Act], this responsibility persists” said Tomas de’Medici.
- “For the past plan review, you should all have access to the full database of plans,” Roth said. There are approximately 95 plans related to this pillar.

RESOURCES

STUDY: The effect of increased pollution on COVID-19 cases and deaths

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7899033/>

National Shared Principles of Environmental Justice

<https://www.ejnet.org/ej/principles.pdf>

Dr. Nell Irvin Painter - "The History of White People"

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LiYiMi_tEe8

<https://www.nytimes.com/2010/03/28/books/review/Gordon-t.html>

<https://www.amazon.com/History-White-People-Irvin-Painter/dp/0393339742>

“Color of Law” – book on redlining and segregated zoning

<https://www.epi.org/publication/the-color-of-law-a-forgotten-history-of-how-our-government-segregated-america/>

NEXT STEPS

- “Please study the industrial corridors and planned urban developments,” Naomi Davis said to the group.