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MAYOR BRANDON JOHNSON INTRODUCES THE HAZEL JOHNSON CUMULATIVE IMPACTS ORDINANCE

The ordinance aims to address the disproportionate pollution burden experienced by some Chicago communities.

CHICAGO – Today, Mayor Brandon Johnson, alongside Alders Ramirez, La Spata, Sigcho-Lopez, Rodriguez-Sanchez, and Hadden, introduced the Hazel Johnson Cumulative Impacts Ordinance, a bold step towards protecting vulnerable communities from disproportionate pollution burdens. By applying a more thorough zoning review process for heavy and intensive land uses that have the greatest potential for pollution exposure, the ordinance aims to prevent additional stressors from compounding in already-burdened communities.

“Chicago is the birthplace of the environmental justice movement, so it is only right that we take the lead nationally on protecting our most vulnerable communities from the harm of pollution,” said **Mayor Brandon Johnson**. “Chicago has a long history as an industrial hub, but that industry has at times come at a cost to working-class Chicagoans. Economic development cannot be a tradeoff where we sacrifice the health of Black and brown communities. We need to build thoughtfully and that means ensuring that our zoning policies help protect all Chicagoans from excessive pollution.”

Named in honor of the late Hazel Johnson, who is widely regarded as the “Mother of Environmental Justice” for her work as an organizer against environmental racism, the ordinance would help protect communities of color, which are statistically more likely to be exposed to pollution, especially from manufacturing.

“The City of Chicago is unwavering in our commitment to making sure everyone can breathe clean air, regardless of what zip code they live in,” said **Angela Tovar, Chicago’s**



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Chief Sustainability Officer and DOE Commissioner. “Working alongside people in our city most impacted by pollution, we have developed these proposed changes to our zoning process and a framework for future collaboration, which will serve as guardrails to help ensure the safety and protection of all Chicagoans.”

“This is historic by nature for Chicago – the Hazel Johnson Cumulative Impacts Ordinance brought community, industry, and government together to create the framework for new development in overburdened communities,” said **Cheryl Johnson, Executive Director of People for Community Recovery**. “My mother fought for 40 years for a policy that centers the lived experiences of real residents from environmental justice communities. It is long overdue for the community to have a seat at the table as equitable partners with stakeholders like industry to inform decision-making in policy areas including transportation, land use, zoning, permitting, enforcement, and more. Chicago needs this historic agreement between all stakeholders as a first step in what will continue to be a collaborative effort to protect the health of our future generations.”

The ordinance aims to account for the combined effects of pollution and other stressors have on certain communities. It would strengthen protections for these environmental justice communities in key ways, including:

- Establishing the **Environmental Justice Project Manager** position at the Department of Environment, to ensure that the department has a dedicated individual committed to advancing environmental justice initiatives.
- Creating an **Environmental Justice (EJ) Advisory Board** with diverse leadership, including members of communities historically impacted by pollution and representatives of the public health, non-profit, and business sectors. The board would be responsible for reviewing and advising on relevant City materials and cumulative impact studies.
- Requiring applicants seeking a zoning permit for heavy industrial land uses to conduct a **cumulative impact study** to assess potential environmental and health impacts as part of the zoning process.
- Requiring a **Special Use or Planned Development zoning review and approval** to ensure thorough evaluation before an applicant can proceed.

Development of the ordinance was built upon the findings from and efforts related to the City’s [2023 Cumulative Impact Assessment](#), a citywide project that identified neighborhoods that experience the greatest cumulative impacts. The strategies and policy



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recommendations generated by City departments in collaboration with Chicago residents and community organizations became the foundation for this ordinance.

According to research by the Metropolitan Planning Council, Latine and Black Chicagoans' neighborhoods are most likely to have land zoned for heavy manufacturing and manufacturing overall. The increased exposure to manufacturing translates to increased risk of pollution exposure, which is strongly associated with cardiovascular disease, respiratory diseases, and other significant health issues.

"To grow its economy, Chicago needs more good jobs, and it needs to grapple with the consequences of the environmental harm that has been wrought on Black and Latine neighborhoods that bear the brunt of industrial pollution. These twin goals are well within reach with the Hazel Johnson Cumulative Impacts Ordinance," **Dan Lurie, President and CEO of the Metropolitan Planning Council**, said. "It will create a new land use system that moves away from site-by-site industrial permitting decisions that can change on a whim – ward by ward and mayor to mayor – and towards a more predictable system that is necessary to attract more investment, facilitate jobs growth, and better protect residents from harm."

"Communities call upon Chicago to uphold its duty to protect our health and the environment. Residents should not have to choose between economically strong neighborhoods and our mental and physical well-being, which suffer under the toxic status quo," said **Juliana Pino, Interim Co-Executive Director, Little Village Environmental Justice Organization**. "With safeguards in place, Chicago will be poised to stop pollution pile-ons at the door, and communities will have a say where there has been none before."

To read more about the policy recommendations that shaped the Hazel Johnson Cumulative Impacts Ordinance, please visit the Cumulative Impact Assessment page: chicago.gov/cumulativeimpact.

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