

Calumet Area Land Use Plan and Design Guidelines Update

Working Group #7 Meeting Summary

Tuesday, July 8, 2025 | 6:00 – 7:30 PM | Zoom

The following summarizes the content presented and feedback received during Working Group Meeting #7 for the [Calumet Area Land Use Plan and Design Guidelines Update](#), led by the City of Chicago Department of Planning and Development (DPD). The summary is organized by a presentation section followed by a discussion summary. For questions, please reach out to Dhara Shah [at dhara@musecommunitydesign.com](mailto:dhara@musecommunitydesign.com).

WELCOME + INTRODUCTIONS

Dhara Shah (MUSE Community + Design) and Luke Mich (Chicago DPD) were the lead facilitators in Working Group #7, which included presentations from Kirsti Bocskay (Department of Public Health) and Gabriela Wagner-Sobrero (Department of Environment).

Working group participants present for this meeting:

Name	Organization
Adam Flickinger	Friends of the Chicago River
Alaina Bridges	Chicago Department of Transportation (CDOT)
Benet Haller	Cook County Department of Transportation and Highways (DoTH)
Beth Dybala	Calumet Area Industrial Commission (CAIC)
Christina Harris	Metropolitan Planning Council (MPC)
Doug Nelson	Calumet Area Industrial Commission (CAIC)
Felicia Minley	Southeast Environmental Task Force (SETF)
Eric Varela	Illinois International Port District (IIPD)
Gaby Wagener-Sobrero	Chicago Department of the Environment (DOE)
Haley Sanders	Chicago Park District
Janie Pochel	Chi Nations
Lauren Umek	Chicago Park District
Laura Verden	Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR)
Lolita Thompson	Metropolitan Water Reclamation District (MWRD)
Maggie Catania	Calumet Connect
Isis Bazaldua	Bridges // Puentes Justice Collective
Stephen Ostrander	Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP)
Thomas Daniels	9th Ward
Roxy (Margaret Cortes)	Parents of Extraordinary Children
Steven Ostrander	Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP)
Vanessa Bly	Bridges // Puentes Justice Collective

Vanessa Schwartz	Metro Family Services
Yessenia Balcazar	Southeast Taskforce (SETF)

AGENDA:

1. Welcome
2. Public Health and Industry
3. Cumulative Impact Ordinance
4. Open House #2
5. Next Steps

WORKING GROUP #5

1. Welcome
2. Revised Draft Plan Goals
3. Goal 4 Draft Objectives
4. Goal 4 Draft Strategy Topics
5. Next Steps

FOCUS OF WORKING GROUP #6

The following is an overview of the Working Group #7 presentation. During this meeting, participants listened to presented information based on Working Group #6's public health goals and how they relate to current policies in public health for the Calumet area, and reviewed by the working group.

PRESENTATION BY CHICAGO DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

Every five years, the Chicago Department of Public Health (CDPH) and local partner organizations assess community health needs and strengths. The current plan, Healthy Chicago 2025, focuses on closing the life expectancy gap in Chicago. One of the most concerning disparities is the 10.6-year gap between Black and non-Black residents.

CDPH uses the University of Wisconsin Population Health Model to explore how the places where people live, learn, work, and play shape health outcomes. Environmental factors like air and water quality are major in determining community well-being.

This gap is largely driven by differences in experiences with key health conditions, including:

- Chronic disease
- Homicide
- Opioid overdoses
- Accidents

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- Infant mortality
- Infectious disease

Air pollution contributes directly to many of these conditions. It especially affects heart and respiratory health, which are linked to chronic illness. It also impacts reproductive outcomes such as low birth weight and prematurity, which can lead to infant death.

Air Pollution and Health

Globally, air pollution is responsible for over 6.7 million premature deaths. In the United States, the primary health risks stem from fine particulate matter, specifically PM 2.5 and PM 10. These particles are small enough to enter the lungs and, in some cases, reach the bloodstream.

Health impacts include heart and lung disease, reproductive complications such as low birth weight and premature birth, and even cancer. Exposure to air pollution can harm the immune system, contribute to developmental issues, and worsen existing health problems. Both short- and long-term exposure is harmful, and the impact varies depending on the duration, concentration, and a person's overall health.

Who Is Most at Risk?

Certain groups are more vulnerable to air pollution, including children, older adults, pregnant individuals, people with asthma or other chronic diseases, outdoor workers, and communities of color. People with lower incomes and those living or working near pollution sources also face greater risk.

The Chicago EJ (Environmental Justice) Index was developed locally by CDPH in collaboration with the Department of Environment, CDOT, and environmental justice organizations. It is based on California's 2020 CalEnviroScreen method and focuses on local environmental and health conditions. The index allows comparisons only between Chicago census tracts, and it does not assign specific health risk values, but highlights areas for further analysis and investment

Calumet Area Snapshot

- EJ Index percentile:
 - The Calumet region ranks in the 35th percentile
 - South Deering has the highest scoring tract at the 98th percentile
 - Average score across the area: 68th percentile
- Older adult population:
 - Over 37,000 older adults live in the Calumet region
- Asthma rates:
 - Ranges from 8% in Burnside to 27.2% in Pullman

- Low-income population:
 - Over 90,000 residents live at or below 200% of the poverty line
- PM 2.5 concentration:
 - Citywide variation is minimal due to limits in air monitoring resolution
 - The federal standard is now 9 µg/m³

What CDPH Is Doing to Reduce Air Pollution?

CDPH is working alongside other city departments to improve air quality through several strategies:

1. Strengthening Transportation Policies
 - Improve public transit access to reduce car dependency
2. Industrial Emission Control
 - Regulate industrial polluters
 - Use fenceline monitoring near industrial zones
 - Enforce penalties for non-compliance
3. Cleaner Energy Solutions
 - Transition all city buildings to solar energy
4. Construction and Dust Control
 - Require best practices like water sprays and wind barriers
 - Enforce emission controls on construction equipment
5. Regional and Federal Coordination
 - Partner with the U.S. EPA and Illinois EPA on emissions regulation
6. Community-Based Monitoring and Education
 - Deploy air quality sensors in every ward and community area
 - Prioritize neighborhoods with high EJ Index scores

Because of current air quality modeling limitations and the number of federally regulated monitors, it is difficult to get highly localized data on pollution levels. To address this, CDPH is working with the UIC School of Public Health to deploy at least one air quality sensor in every ward and community area across Chicago. This dashboard is for informational and educational purposes only and will not be used for enforcement.

The data collected will feed into a public-facing dashboard, which will launch in early 2026, to provide residents with a better understanding of neighborhood-level air quality conditions.

Discussion:

A participant asked: What is the verdict on air quality in this area?

CDPH's response: The available data isn't accurate enough to give a definitive answer. This is due to the placement of air quality monitors, which limits how localized the data can be. Overall,

air quality appears relatively consistent across Chicago, but exposure varies depending on a person's location and proximity to specific activities or pollution sources.

Air pollution has improved significantly over the past 30 to 40 years. While the air quality standard for PM 2.5 was recently lowered to 9 µg/m³. From 12 µg/m³, current levels in Chicago are slightly above that threshold. CDPH is actively working to reduce those levels and has installed 270 air quality sensors citywide to improve monitoring.

Another participant asked: What percentage of air pollution comes from traffic versus industry?

CDPH's response: It depends on where you are in the city and what sources are nearby. Traffic may be the dominant source in areas closer to major roads or highways. Emissions from factories and other facilities may play a larger role in industrial corridors. The contribution varies by location and land use.

PRESENTATION BY THE DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENT

The Hazel Johnson Cumulative Impact Ordinance is under consideration by the City Council and has not yet been passed. It is named after Hazel Johnson, widely recognized as the mother of environmental justice, who lived in the Altgeld Gardens public housing development on Chicago's Far South Side. She helped bring attention to cumulative impacts, the combined effect of multiple environmental and health stressors, not just air pollution alone.

What Are Cumulative Impacts?

Cumulative impacts consider a broader set of environmental and health-related stressors that can affect a community, including:

- Air pollution
- Water quality
- Proximity to hazardous sites
- Noise
- Industrial activity
- Existing community health conditions

Chicago's Cumulative Impact Assessment

This citywide assessment was co-led by community groups and City departments to identify neighborhoods facing the greatest cumulative burden and to inform both policy development and targeted public investment.

The assessment includes:

- Community Input Summaries
- The Chicago Environmental Justice (EJ) Index and Map
- The City of Chicago Environmental Justice Action Plan
- Cumulative Impacts Policy Recommendations

The assessment primarily serves as an internally focused strategy, guiding departments across the city to operate through a stronger environmental justice lens. Currently, 10 city departments are involved in advancing the plan's goals.

Purpose of the Ordinance

While industrial activity is not the sole source of air pollution, it is a significant contributor. The Hazel Johnson Cumulative Impact Ordinance focuses specifically on regulating this source, while also modifying and strengthening the City's existing land use and air quality zoning processes to better protect public health, which is an improvement to the current system, intended to:

- Promote safer and healthier communities
- Center community health in land use decisions
- Recognize the historic and ongoing impacts of environmental injustice

Key Components of the Ordinance

1. Cumulative Impact Study Requirement
 - a. Intensive industrial facilities must conduct a cumulative impact study before development or expansion to assess potential environmental and health risks.
2. Creation of the Environmental Justice Advisory Board
 - a. A new Environmental Justice (EJ) Advisory Board will be formed to review cumulative impact studies and provide guidance on environmental and health-related issues.
3. Additional Oversight for Industrial Facilities
 - a. New and expanding intensive industrial facilities will undergo additional review to ensure they do not harm the community or environmental health.
4. HUD Voluntary Compliance
 - a. The ordinance also fulfills the City's Voluntary Compliance Agreement requirements with the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD).

Environmental Justice Advisory Board

The Department of Environment shared details about the role of the new EJ Advisory Board:

- **Public and Advisory Only:** The board is open to the public and is advisory in nature. It does not have decision-making authority.
- **Collaborative Role:** Works with City departments to review and provide recommendations on environmental justice policies and initiatives, including the Environmental Justice Action Plan.
- **Industrial Facility Review:** Reviews new or expanding industrial facilities and recommends mitigation measures to reduce their impact on surrounding communities.

OPEN HOUSE #2 PREVIEW

January Open House #1

- Identified community challenges, opportunities, and needs

Upcoming Open House #2

- Share a draft land use framework
- Present the draft plan vision, goals, and framework principles
- Gather community feedback

Continued Engagement

- 2 bilingual virtual meetings(August)
- 5 pop-up events(August / September)
- Workshops and focus groups (August / September)

CONTENT OVERVIEW

Draft Vision Statement:

The goal is to share this vision widely to ensure that the plan's broad goals resonate with the community and reflect their priorities.

“Building on the region's industrial legacy, natural assets, and dynamic culture, Calumet Area will sustain A thriving and innovative economy, promote sustainability and environmental stewardship, and support safe and healthy neighborhoods centered around the Calumet River.”

Draft Plan Goals:

- **Goal 1:** Protect and enhance Calumet's natural resources and open spaces
- **Goal 2:** Enhance infrastructure to improve mobility, safety, and sustainability
- **Goal 3:** Support the health and well-being of Calumet's communities
- **Goal 4:** Bolster regional culture, identity, and collaboration

How was the land use framework developed?

The draft land use framework was developed through a comprehensive analysis of several key areas:

- Economy and Workforce
 - Market conditions and trends
 - Existing land uses and industrial clusters
 - Job density and wages
- Nature and Ecology
 - Existing open space and opportunities for expansion
 - Access to open space and the Calumet River
 - Open space edge conditions and adjacent uses
- Transportation and Infrastructure
 - Existing transportation networks
 - Planned improvements (CDOT, CTA, Metra, Cook County)
 - Development opportunity areas and proximity to transportation
- Health and Community
 - Cumulative Impact Assessment and Environmental Justice Considerations
 - Neighborhood pollution risks and code violations
 - Strategies for addressing public health challenges

Key Framework Considerations:

Existing Industrial Development

- Where are different industrial uses located, and where have long-term investments been made?

Land Use Conflicts and Edge Conditions

- Where are adjacent land uses incompatible, and how can conflicts be minimized in the future?

Transportation Networks and Improvements

- How do the Calumet River, railroads, and roads support existing land uses? How will the proposed improvements affect future uses?

Redevelopment and Open Space Opportunities

- How might vacant properties and other underutilized sites be reimagined for the future?

Draft Land Use Framework Principles

1. Preserve opportunities for new industrial development
 - a. Maintain industrial land uses to support new industrial development by redeveloping vacant properties and expanding existing operators.
2. Cluster heavy industrial uses
 - a. Locate future heavy industrial uses where infrastructure best supports them and can be buffered from residential and commercial uses.
3. Reduce the intensity near neighborhoods.
 - a. Step down future use intensity adjacent to residential areas and leverage lower intensity industrial or commercial uses as buffers.
4. Expand the open space network
 - a. Increase open space acreage for ecological benefit, recreation, and enhanced buffering and screening around industrial uses.

Draft Land Use Framework Use Categories

Category	Open Space and Restoration	Neighborhood Mixed-Use	Commercial and Light Industrial	Moderate Industrial	Heavy Industrial
Typical Uses	Publicly-managed and privately-managed restoration, conservation, recreation, cultural, and buffer uses	Retail, restaurants, office, education, healthcare, multifamily residential, single-family residential, private open space	Retail, restaurants, office, education, healthcare, limited food and beverage production, fabrication studios, contractor facilities	A broad range of industries: manufacturing and processing, warehousing, distribution	Moderate Industrial uses + intensive manufacturing, heavy freight and logistics, waste processing, scrap metal and construction debris recycling
Discouraged Uses	Residential, commercial, industrial	Industrial	Full-scale manufacturing processing, warehousing, and	Waste processing, metal recycling, intensive manufacturing, heavy freight	Commercial, institutional, residential

			other intensive industrial uses	and logistics; commercial, institutional, residential	
Siting Considerations	Near existing natural areas or natural assets; areas where vacant vegetated properties provide opportunities to buffer intensive uses	Areas where existing residential, institutional, and neighborhood commercial uses exist; areas where vacant properties near residential provide an opportunity to reimagine former industrial land	Areas where existing commercial / light industrial uses exist; areas where these uses could provide a buffer between industry and homes	Areas where existing manufacturing and processing uses exist; areas with access to highway and rail networks; areas with limited impact to neighborhoods	Areas where existing manufacturing and processing uses exist; areas with access to highway and rail networks; areas with limited impact to neighborhoods

OPEN HOUSE ACTIVITIES AND STATIONS

- Orientation
 - Participants will receive materials, a booklet, and an in-depth overview of how to interact with the different stations.
- Vision
 - Participants can review and provide feedback on the Draft Vision Statement and the Draft Goals and Objectives.
- Draft Framework
 - Participants can learn about how the land use framework was developed. Feedback will be invited on key elements of the framework, including:
 - Guiding Principles
 - Use Categories
 - Framework
- Large Maps
 - Participants will engage with a facilitator to discuss the draft framework using large visual maps. The facilitator will guide discussions around:
 - Types of land uses proposed
 - Potential challenges the proposed land uses might present
 - Possible alternative uses or solutions

NEXT STEP

The next Working Group meeting is on Zoom on August 12th. The calendar invite has been sent out.

Community Meeting #2 will take place July 24th at Olive Harvey (10001 S Woodlawn Ave, Chicago, IL 60628) from 5:00 to 7:30 p.m., followed by two virtual events for those who can't attend the in-person event.