



CITY OF CHICAGO • OFFICE OF THE MAYOR



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

September 18, 2023

CONTACT:

Mayor's Press Office

312.744.3334

press@cityofchicago.org

Chicago Department of Public Health

Andy Buchanan

312.747.9698

**CHICAGO, COMMUNITY LEADERS PUBLICLY RELEASE CUMULATIVE IMPACT
ASSESSMENT REPORT**

*Report Identifies Environmental Justice Communities, Creates Action Plan for City
Departments and Details Policy Recommendations for City Ordinance*

CHICAGO—Today, community and City of Chicago leaders publicly released the findings and recommendations from a 15-month process to develop Chicago's first Cumulative Impact Assessment (the "Assessment"), a citywide project to provide data on how environmental burdens and other stressors vary in impact across the city. This Assessment, co-led and co-designed with people and organizations who live with these issues every day, identifies neighborhoods that experience the greatest cumulative impacts. It also reinforces and supports the requirements of the City's voluntary compliance agreement with the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development announced last May. Recognizing that environmental protection and public health require a whole-of-government approach, the Assessment also provides strategies and actionable policy recommendations to guide decision-making on issues such as land use/zoning, permitting, enforcement, transportation planning, and more.

"Advancing environmental justice alongside economic development is necessary to better guide our actions to mitigate environmental burdens in Chicago," **said Mayor Brandon Johnson**. "In the months to come, we will work to build support for a new ordinance that protects all Chicagoans from the cumulative impact of air and water pollution, climate change, improper land use and other stressors so that residents share directly in the benefits of creating healthy, sustainable communities throughout our city."

The baseline Assessment was conducted by the Chicago Department of Public Health (CDPH), Office of Climate & Environmental Equity (OCEE) and the City's



CITY OF CHICAGO • OFFICE OF THE MAYOR



Environmental Equity Working Group (EEWG) – community representatives, environmental leaders, and local organizations that provide strategic counsel and advice on Chicago’s environmental initiatives – from May 2022 to August 2023, supported by funding from the Chicago Recovery Plan. Working groups dedicated to data and methods, policy, communications and engagement, and interdepartmental coordination met regularly to guide this work.

“The Cumulative Impact Assessment has shown that certain neighborhoods in Chicago are bearing a disproportionate burden of our economic development, specifically with regard to intensive industry and truck traffic,” **said Angela Tovar, Chief Sustainability Officer for the City of Chicago.** “This report is a roadmap and a call to further action for Chicago – and, in particular, its elected leaders, City departments, community organizations, and industry.”

“Ensuring that grassroots leaders residing in communities facing environmental challenges have a seat at the table is crucial for shaping the future of our neighborhoods,” **said Olga Bautista, Executive Director of the Southeast Environmental Task Force and co-chair of the Cumulative Impact Assessment Project Management Team.** “This report, coupled with the commitment to enact an ordinance aimed at dismantling a long-standing racially biased zoning system, highlights the vital contribution of leaders from frontline communities who actively participated in this transformative process.”

The Cumulative Impact Assessment report released today includes four key components:

- [A Community Input Summary](#) and [Overview of Community Input Provided During Assessment](#) which include a qualitative analysis of community comment provided on City plans and actions in recent years, as well as feedback gathered through various engagement events conducted this summer.
- [A Chicago Environmental Justice Index \(Chicago EJ Index\)](#) and [Map](#) that identifies EJ neighborhoods – Chicago communities that are most burdened by pollution and most vulnerable to its effects based on environmental exposures and conditions, sensitive populations and socioeconomic factors at the census tract level. These communities include Austin, East Garfield Park, Englewood, Humboldt Park, Lower West Side, McKinley Park, New City, North Lawndale, Roseland, South Deering, South Lawndale, West Englewood and West Garfield Park.



- [**An Environmental Justice Action Plan**](#) that includes dozens of specific, actionable policy changes that can be implemented now based on current municipal codes and authorities. A few key examples from the Plan, which was developed in partnership with more than 10 City departments, include commitments to:
 - Expand the City’s community air monitoring network (Public Health)
 - Implement recommendations from the Southwest Industrial Corridor Transportation Study to minimize the impact of trucks and heavy vehicles on streets, restrict truck traffic, manage truck parking and idling, expand the 3-1-1 system for truck complaints, incorporate emission reduction goals into transportation planning, and establish freight health metrics (Transportation)
 - Create new/update industry-specific operational rules for businesses that create the greatest community impacts (Public Health)
 - Increase community benefits, such as trees, vacant lot greening and expanded waste collection (Streets and Sanitation)
 - Propose updates to zoning regulations for manufacturing, recycling, waste-related, and other intensive industrial uses (Planning & Development)
- [**Recommendations to inform the development of an EJ & Cumulative Impact Ordinance**](#) that would establish new governance structures, authorities, and resources to protect neighborhoods more fully from the cumulative impact of environmental burdens. Recommendations include mandates that the City consider environmental, health and social stressors in its decision-making and new requirements to ensure that people who live in these neighborhoods benefit directly from local development.

“Based on the Chicago EJ Index, areas of greatest concern for pollution burdens and vulnerability to its effects are primarily located on the South and West Sides of the City, including neighborhoods bisected by major highways and high concentrations of industry,” **said CDPH Deputy Managing Commissioner Megan Cunningham.** “How to strike a better balance between environmental protection and business growth to promote public health is a complicated issue – and the Cumulative Impact Assessment offers quantitative data and the voice of EJ community members so we can target our efforts in the places that need it most.”

Key next steps following from the Cumulative Impact Assessment to be taken in 2023 include advancing the proposed City policy and implementing practice changes; additional quantitative data gathering and analysis, to be displayed in a public-facing data dashboard; and continued and strengthened community engagement. The co-governance approach employed during the Assessment will



CITY OF CHICAGO • OFFICE OF THE MAYOR



extend into this next phase of work, with OCEE and CDPH working with the EEWG to make decisions together and ensure ongoing accountability.

"This report gives us a clear picture of which communities are being harmed and how, and what it will take to protect them. Now comes the hard part: the City must act on it," **said Alfredo Romo Executive Director of Neighbors for Environmental Justice.**

Many people shared their time, expertise, and resources during the Cumulative Impact Assessment process – including community leaders from the Chicago Environmental Justice Network; staff from more the City departments who participated in an Interdepartmental EJ Work Group; business and industry representatives; and everyone who lifted their voices and provided input through surveys, in-person events, and written comments. Technical experts on the project include the Illinois Public Health Institute, Tetra Tech and APEX.

For more information and ways to stay informed about this work, please visit [Chicago.gov/cumulativeimpact](https://chicago.gov/cumulativeimpact).

###