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# Friends of the Chicago River



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April 15, 2024

Chairwoman Flores  
Chicago Plan Commission  
City of Chicago  
121 N. LaSalle St.  
Chicago, Illinois 60602

## RE: Sustainable Development Policy Update

Dear Chairwoman Flores:

Friends of the Chicago River's mission is to protect and restore the Chicago-Calumet River system for all people, water, and wildlife. Our goal is that City policies and projects help to realize our vision that the Chicago-Calumet River system is a healthy, biodiverse, climate resilient ecosystem with equitable, open access for all.

We participated throughout the Department of Planning and Development's process to update the Sustainable Development Policy and we think that the proposed modernizations and updates are crucial strategies that would help to ensure that new developments in the City contribute to protecting the environment. Even seemingly minor private sector investments, like green roofs, can help protect the river and adjacent community areas from polluted run-off, provide micro-habitats for wildlife, reduce heat islands, and clean the air. It is essential that the City of Chicago continues to emphasize these investments because each year climate change related extreme weather becomes increasingly common. Climate change will cause more damage to river ecosystems, destroy infrastructure, impact water quality, and further burden Environmental Justice communities in the coming years.

We are happy to see that the public draft has been released and hope that the City will put this powerful new policy into action soon. **We are particularly excited by the revised points that encourage expanded and naturalized river edges, aquatic habitat, modernized landscape strategies that incorporate native landscape practices, increased stormwater capture, and that emphasize bird friendly design practices. These types of nature-positive development requirements are common in other cities, and we think they are essential components of the new policy.** Our [Developer Resource Guide](#) provides additional details about our priority river edge strategies for development.

Please feel free to contact our planning director, Adam Flickinger at [aflickinger@chicagoriver.org](mailto:aflickinger@chicagoriver.org) or (312) 939-0490, ext. 15 with any questions you might have.

Sincerely,

Margaret Frisbie  
Executive Director

April 16, 2024

TO: Chicago Plan Commission

FROM: Emily Bowers  
Sr. Director, State & Local Affairs

RE: Draft Sustainable Development Policy

I am writing to express the Green Building Initiative's (GBI) support of the Chicago Draft Sustainable Development Policy, released April 15, 2024.

GBI staff leadership and Chicago-based Board members had the opportunity to offer input to the Chicago Department of Planning and Development (DPD) over the course of a year, and what's reflected in the draft is a path towards even more sustainable, healthy, and resilient buildings in Chicago.

If GBI can be of assistance to the Commission or DPD as this becomes final, please let us know. We're thrilled to see this update and are eager to continue supporting buildings and portfolios in Chicago.

Thank you,  
Emily Bowers  
[ebowers@thegbi.org](mailto:ebowers@thegbi.org)

April 18, 2024  
Chicago Plan Commission  
City Hall, 121 N. LaSalle St.  
Chicago, IL 60602

Metropolitan Planning Council (MPC), a 90-year-old independent, nonprofit policy and planning organization dedicated to building equity in the built environment, submits this written testimony in support of the Department of Planning and Development's 2024 update to the Chicago Sustainable Development Policy (SDP).

The SDP requires projects that receive public funding or need special approvals to incorporate sustainable design elements. It is a point-based system in which project teams select from a menu of strategies across a series of thematic categories. SDP was first implemented in 2004 and then modified in 2017 with the assistance of an advisory committee.

Since it was developed, the policy has expanded to move beyond green roof requirements to include elements that include (but are not limited to) energy, stormwater, water use, landscapes, and transportation. The 2017 update was a step in the right direction towards addressing major challenges the city is facing around climate change and sustainability, but the engagement process to complete the update was limited to mainly architects, developers, and others in the built environment industry. The engagement process for the 2024 update was much more expansive and included individuals from across different sectors with stakeholders from economic and community development, academic institutions, environmental advocates, developers, architects, and more. MPC participated in focus groups as well as facilitated conversations with River advocates as part of its role co-convening the River Ecology and Governance Task Force.

Opening the update process to a broader range of stakeholders has allowed for a number of different voices to shape the 2024 update, helping the City remove redundant and/or obsolete requirements, while allowing for new strategies to foster innovation and flexibility. In particular, MPC supports the addition of updates that will positively impact Chicago's rivers and its neighboring communities through strategies that focus on naturalizing river edges, increasing river setbacks, and providing greater and more diverse spaces of aquatic habitat. We are also pleased to see a focus on affordable housing and air quality as these strategies will increase community benefits and improve public health outcomes across the city.

MPC appreciates the City's commitment to leading an engaged process, and we are optimistic that the 30-day public comment period will provide an opportunity for even greater resident feedback to guide revisions for a final policy. MPC believes that this update moves the city in the direction of greater sustainability and resiliency for development projects without putting undue burden on developers, and we look forward to contributing during the public comment period over the next month.

Sincerely,



Kendra J. Freeman  
Vice President of Programs and Strategic Impact

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