

# COMMUNITY INPUT SUMMARY – KEY FINDINGS

The City of Chicago and community partners are working on the first city-wide Cumulative Impact Assessment to describe how environmental, health and social stressors affect our communities, and to identify neighborhoods that experience the greatest impacts.

As a starting point, environmental justice leaders and advocates called upon the City to review input already provided by people living in community areas most affected by industrial development - primarily lower-income, Black and Latinx neighborhoods on the South and West sides of Chicago. For years, community members have provided comments on permitting and zoning decisions, regulations, and City plans. We analyzed this qualitative data to better understand the lived experience of cumulative impacts and described our findings in the Community Input Summary. **Here are some key take-aways we received from advocates and the community that will shape how we approach the Cumulative Impact Assessment and the recommendations that follow from it.**

## THEME 1: ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE FOCUS AREAS



- Disproportionate impact of pollution on South and West sides of Chicago
- Polluting industries continue to move from white neighborhoods to overburdened Black and Latinx communities
- Normalization of pollution in overburdened communities
- Isolation from other neighborhoods
- Environmental hazards due to air and water pollution

## THEME 2: ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH OUTCOMES ASSOCIATED WITH POLLUTION EXPOSURE



- Asthma and respiratory concerns
- Cancer
- Mental health impacts
- Hidden toxins, odors and difficulty identifying source of health concerns
- Obstacles to health-promoting behaviors, impacting community longevity

## THEME 3: SOCIO-ECONOMIC IMPACT ASSOCIATED WITH POLLUTING FACILITIES



- Questioning of burdens and benefits of polluting industries
- Lack of industrial economic benefits, relative to costs
- Lack of investment or reinvestment in overburdened communities
- Perception of a neighborhood being used as the City's dumpsite
- Corporate influence valued over neighborhood voice

## THEME 4: DECISION-MAKING PROCESS CONCERNS



- Government disinvestment
- Perceptions of intentional damage
- Lack of government consistency
- Lack of transparency in criteria and data used to make decisions
- Use of inadequate criteria for pollution metrics
- Inauthentic community engagement and perception of a matter being a “done deal”
- Lack of corporate responsibility

## THEME 5: COMMUNITY RECOMMENDATIONS



### **Recommendations for community-driven decision-making in government processes:**

- Inclusion of all community members in decision-making
- Need for historical reckoning and address trauma as part of decision-making
- Importance of lived experience and community voices

### **Changes to existing ordinances, codes and processes:**

- Regulations and standards for industrial operations
- Enforcement measures
- Increasing emphasis on proactive pollution prevention

### **Recommendations related to the implementation of solutions and regulatory actions:**

- Investing in overburdened communities
- Community ownership
- Additional opportunities

The City and community partners formed Cumulative Impact Assessment working groups for Data & Methods, Communications & Engagement, and Policy. The working groups will consider these findings as they develop an environmental justice definition (including identifying environmental, demographic and health indicators and neighborhood designation process); create a map outlining environmental justice communities in Chicago; and advance policy and system changes. We will continue community engagement to gather additional perspectives throughout this process.

To learn more about the Cumulative Impact Assessment, visit [Chicago.gov/cumulativeimpact](https://Chicago.gov/cumulativeimpact).