



**To: Chicago City Council Committee on Zoning, Landmarks, and Building Standards**  
**Re: Air Quality & Zoning Ordinance**

January 25, 2021

Dear Committee members,

The Metropolitan Planning Council (MPC) is writing today to **urge City Council to support Mayor Lightfoot's Air Quality & Zoning Ordinance as proposed and to reject the substitute ordinance.**

In October, MPC asked the City Council to hold the Mayor's ordinance for further review by stakeholders. That hold allowed for more outreach and improvements to the ordinance. MPC thanks you for your action then, and your continued attention to the matter. Mayor Lightfoot's ordinance is now ready to be adopted and is an important step toward addressing the disproportionate health, safety, congestion, and other burdens faced by communities with highly-concentrated industrial activity.

MPC is supportive of requiring industrial developments to go through more stringent processes of public input, vetting and scrutiny. Processes such as the Planned Development and Special Use frameworks provide more opportunity for meaningful review than does the "as-of-right" system many industrial developments fall into now. Mayor Lightfoot's ordinance, as written, allows the opportunity for more input and review from community members, aldermen, and City staff alike. Public review is a critical mechanism for moving toward more transparent, equitable, and environmentally sustainable economic development across Chicago. The current "as-of-right" system allows many industrial developments to come into areas adjacent to residential and riverfront uses without public review as long as they meet the current zoning. This system fails to take into account how the nearby land uses may have changed over time as communities change, as well as any cumulative effects from nearby land uses. Furthermore, it prevents the community and local representatives from raising reasonable concerns, planning proactively, and shaping the future of their neighborhoods.

It is MPC's hope that this ordinance will begin to move Chicago toward a fundamental change in how we zone, review, and permit new industrial uses so that we can ultimately reap the employment and tax revenue benefits of these developments, while meaningfully mitigating any cumulative harms.

In addition to supporting the Mayor's Air Quality & Zoning Ordinance, MPC asks you to hold the administration accountable on several related actions, including:

- Proactive inclusion of environmental justice communities and organizations on all future action and policy related to industrial development.
- Launch an Environmental Equity Working Group administered by the Mayor's Office.
- Continue to move forward a modernization process for the Planned Development and Special Use approval processes to increase

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transparency, accountability, consideration of cumulative community impacts, and ensure greater environmental and public health outcomes from resulting development. This should be a priority for the aforementioned Environmental Equity Working Group.

- Develop a citywide strategy for transportation, distribution, and logistics (TDL) placement that analyzes current trends in facility placement across the city, and identifies ways to guide new developments to equitably distribute the burdens and benefits of TDL across Chicago neighborhoods.

Please contact the Metropolitan Planning Council with any questions regarding this statement.

Sincerely,



**Josh Ellis**  
Vice President  
Metropolitan Planning Council



**Chloe Gurin-Sands**  
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Metropolitan Planning Council