



COOK COUNTY
GOVERNMENT

Environmental Justice Policy Town Hall

Cook County Government

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Your Input**



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Environmental Justice Policy Town Hall

A circular graphic with a yellow center and teal outer rings, containing the text 'Meeting Agenda'.

Meeting Agenda

1

Welcome and Opening Remarks

2

Introductory Policy Video

3

Overview of Environmental Justice Policy

4

Breakout Group Discussions

5

Closing and Next Steps

2

Introductory Policy Video



3

Overview of Cook County Environmental Justice Policy Draft





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Purpose



Redress historical environmental injustices and promote equity in Cook County.



Establish an Environmental Justice (EJ) framework to guide decision-making.



Center those most impacted by environmental harm in Cook County Offices Under the President (OUP) programs.



Ensure accountability through community engagement and transparent reporting.



Living document maintained by the Department of Environment and Sustainability (DES).



Background



Low-income communities of color have historically been disproportionately impacted by pollution.

Historical practices like redlining excluded these communities from decision-making.

EJ movement rooted in Chicago (Hazel Johnson, Altgeld Gardens) and Warren County.

OUP has a responsibility to address past injustices and create solutions.

EJ policy supported by Cook County COVID-19 Response Plan and Equity Fund Taskforce.



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Environmental Justice Community Advisory Committee (EJ CAC)

Purpose and role



Formed to **co-develop** the EJ policy with County staff.



Centers **community voices** and **lived experiences** in policy development.



Members represent **diverse communities** across Cook County.

EJ CAC Members

Delia Barajas,
Voces Fieles Comunitarias Contra
la Opresi3n

Oliver Ciciora,
Southsiders Organized for
Unity and Liberation

Aliaa Eldabli,
Radiant Vessels Community Services

Jerri Garl,
Environmental Justice Evanston

Jersey-Shabazz Hosier,
Access Living

Fredia Lindsey,
resident of Robbins

Theresa Reyes McNamara,
Southwest Environmental Alliance

Daisy Rosa,
resident of Rolling Meadows

Gina Roxas,
Trickster Cultural Center

Myrna Salgado,
Chicago Environmental Justice Network

Apostle Carl White, Jr.,
Southland Ministerial Health Network

Angela Xu,
resident of Chicago

Michelle Yates,
South Suburbs for Greenspace



Environmental Justice Internal Working Group (IWG)

Purpose and role



Formed to **learn about environmental justice** and **engage** County staff across departments.



Evaluated programs, processes and policies to **identify EJ intersections**.



Framed EJ policy draft that captures OUP role and possible actions and amplify EJ CAC input.

County Departments/Agencies

Led by Department of Environment and Sustainability (DES)

Office of the President (OOP)

- Justice Advisory Council (JAC)
- Human Rights and Ethics (DHRE)

Bureau of Administration (BOA)

- Department of Emergency Management and Regional Security (EMRS)
- Department of Transportation and Highways (DoTH)

Bureau of Economic Development (BED)

- Department of Planning and Development (DPD)
- Building and Zoning (DBZ)

Bureau of Technology (BOT)

Department of Public Health (CCDPH)

DAC

Slide 8

DAO Need to fix formatting

Debra Kutska (Bureau of Adminis, 2025-01-16T18:06:01.150)



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Overview of Guiding Principles

Jemez Principles for Environmental Justice guide ethical land use, equitable public policy, self-determination, and participatory decision-making.

OUP plays a key role in **improving environmental quality** and **repairing past injustices** by supporting and investing in EJ communities.

Environmental justice highlights the link between **systemic racism and practices of environmental racism**.

Communities of color face disproportionate environmental burdens, leading to racially disparate health and socioeconomic outcomes.

Environmental justice **emphasizes community partnership** and empowerment to address and rectify past harms.

Education on environmental justice is essential to increase community awareness and engagement.



Implementation Initial Steps



Action Step



Time Frame

Continue to convene the internal EJ working group

The internal EJ working group established, to **meet quarterly**

Build OUP staffing dedicated to environmental justice, providing capacity and training for current staff



Two full-time EJ staff to be hired in **2025**

Establish a long-term EJ working group with external partners

Established in **2025** and continue for two years. Governance and long-term structure defined in the first year



Implementation Initial Steps

 Action Step	 Time Frame
Develop public reporting and engagement processes and timeline	The first quarterly public report to be released in 2025 with a full reporting timeline in 2026
Perform a thorough assessment of OUP programs and policies and provide recommendations	Program assessment recommendations to be completed by 2026
Identify a mapping tool and define EJ communities in Cook County	An official EJ communities map to be finalized by 2026



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Primary Focus Areas for this Framework



Air Pollution



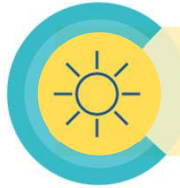
Community Engagement



**Water: Access to Clean Drinking
Water, Infrastructure and Flooding**



Transit/Transportation



Climate Resiliency



Lack of Trees/Green Space



Access to Healthy Food



Economic Development/Jobs



Air Pollution

Immediate Steps

- 1 Evaluate what air pollution data is currently being collected by OUP and relevant agencies.
- 2 Improve public communication on the air monitoring program and Clean Energy Plan by presenting data types, collection methods, and frequency on the OUP website.
- 3 Ensure Spanish translation, at minimum for all data pages.



Future Considerations

How can OUP incorporate community-led data collection and monitoring, particularly in suburban areas, and collaborate with the City of Chicago on its community air monitoring network?

How can OUP support electrification efforts for residents and municipalities, especially in the suburbs?

What additional OUP-led air monitoring and accountability practices could help reduce environmental and public health harms?



Water Access, Infrastructure and Flooding

Immediate Steps

- 1 Identify OUP-related clean water programs and services.
- 2 Clearly present program eligibility and information in multiple media formats on the OUP website, with resources for residents, businesses, municipalities, and nonprofits.
- 3 Ensure Spanish translation for program guides.
- 4 Report on current OUP infrastructure efforts.
- 5 Respond promptly to residents' concerns about water infrastructure and connect them to appropriate resources.
- 6 Compile resources for disaster preparedness and recovery (e.g., flooding, contamination).



Future Considerations

How can OUP departments collaborate to ensure clean, affordable water access?

Can OUP programs support public health initiatives through resident-facing programming?

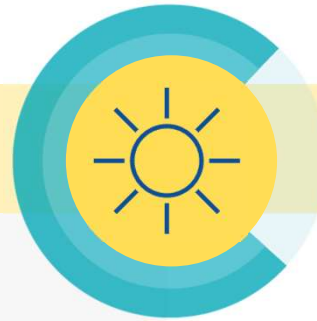
What additional funding opportunities can be pursued for infrastructure improvements?

How can OUP better define and communicate available water infrastructure services?



Climate Resiliency

Immediate Steps



Future Considerations

- 1 Create inventory of climate resiliency programs and initiatives, including community planning efforts.
- 2 Form an internal working group to develop a climate resiliency plan with timelines and intentional community engagement.
- 3 Standardize messaging for residents about disaster preparation and climate adaptation.
- 4 Identify the best communication methods.
- 5 Compile resources to help residents, businesses, and municipalities prepare for and recover from extreme weather events.

How can OUP prioritize resiliency measures in funded projects?

What funding opportunities can support resiliency hubs, green spaces, and renewable energy upgrades?

How can the climate resiliency plan integrate with the County's Multi-Jurisdictional Hazard Mitigation Plan?



Access to Healthy Food

Immediate Steps

- 1 Implement the Cook County Good Food Purchasing Program (GFPP) across departments.
- 2 Increase investments in local food producers and businesses, including MBEs/WBEs and other small businesses.
- 3 Evaluate the impact of Ordinance 22-5345, which created a property tax incentive to support grocery stores in food deserts.
- 4 Promote and expand Food is Medicine programs across suburban Cook County.
- 5 Use Metro Chicago 211 to connect residents to community food access sites.
- 6 Continue the OUP's gap analysis of urban agriculture.



Future Considerations

How can the OUP expand participation in federal nutrition programs like SNAP and WIC?

What policy solutions can address gaps in urban agriculture and improve access to community farms?

How can the OUP support increased funding for school meal programs?

How can federal waivers, such as CMS 1115, be leveraged to support health initiatives through food programs?



Community Engagement

Immediate Steps

- 1 Evaluate OUP's language access policy using resources like the IL EPA Language Access Plan.
- 2 Review and map public-facing programs to understand how residents currently receive information.
- 3 Assess how OUP seeks input from community members and incorporates it into projects and policies.
- 4 Review youth engagement strategies.
- 5 Incorporate accessibility features in communication.
- 6 Clearly define OUP jurisdiction for EJ-related practices.



Future Considerations

How can OUP develop an engagement policy that ensures public input?

What educational resources can be created for multiple audiences, including those without internet access?

How can OUP's digital equity initiatives improve public engagement?

What processes can ensure youth participation in OUP programs and policies?



Transit and Transportation

Immediate Steps

- 1 Implement the recommendations in the 2023 Cook County Bike Plan and Cook County Transit Plan.
- 2 Invest in the CREATE program to reduce air emissions from idling trains.
- 3 Ensure project advisory committees represent community diversity and maximize participation.
- 4 Advocate for legislative efforts to fund and expand the regional transit system.



Future Considerations

How can the Connecting Cook County Long-Range Transportation Plan (2026 update) identify further EJ policy steps?

How can truck routes be studied and adjusted to minimize EJ impacts from noise and air pollution?

What collaboration opportunities exist with local and state agencies to reduce health impacts in high-pollution areas?



Trees and Green Space

Immediate Steps

- 1 Launch a tree-planting program prioritizing communities with low tree canopies.
- 2 Report on efforts to maintain and expand tree canopies at County facilities and in municipalities.
- 3 Engage stakeholders to determine how best to support high-priority communities.
- 4 Work with municipalities on brownfield redevelopment and revitalization for green space expansion.



Future Considerations

What funding opportunities exist to support tree preservation, planting, and maintenance programs?

How can partnerships with the Land Bank and Forest Preserves improve green space access?



Economic Development and Jobs

Immediate Steps

- 1 Catalog initiatives by OUP to support green jobs, particularly those incentivized by federal laws.
- 2 Expand Small Business Source, BRITE, and Solar Collaborative programs to promote clean energy and pollution prevention.
- 3 Review procurement policies to increase local firm participation and cooperative purchasing in low-income areas.
- 4 Identify industrial sites in unincorporated Cook County and assess EJ improvement opportunities.
- 5 Promote equity in green building through architecture and construction initiatives.



Future Considerations

How can green jobs initiatives align with EJ goals?

How can the OUP leverage funding from CEJA and other clean energy programs?

What measures can improve EJ outcomes in large-scale industrial developments?



Short-Term Timeline

2025

Begin the assessment of the department programs and policies



2025

Hire dedicated OUP staff who specialize in EJ



2025

Identify methods for education and involvement in EJ policy implementation



2025

Establish external working group



2025

Release first public quarterly report



2026

Release initial department program and policy assessment recommendation report



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Breakout Group Discussions





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Public Input Form




Share Your Input

on our environmental justice policy to ensure that every Cook County resident has access to clean air, safe drinking water and a healthy environment.

<https://www.cookcountyl.gov/service/environmental-justice>

Get in Touch

 (312) 603-8200

 ej@cookcountyl.gov

Deadline to Submit Public Input

Midnight, February 7, 2025