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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

July 27, 2020

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**MAYOR LIGHTFOOT ANNOUNCES NEW AIR QUALITY AGENDA TO IMPROVE
HEALTH AND ENSURE EQUITABLE ECONOMIC GROWTH**

*Chief Sustainability Officer to Convene Aldermen, City Departments and Environmental
Advocates to Improve Chicago's Air Quality, Create Jobs and Mitigate Cumulative
Impact of Industrial Activity*

CHICAGO – Mayor Lori E. Lightfoot today announced the City's creation of an air quality reform agenda, an effort to improve Chicago's air quality while promoting equitable economic growth. The new agenda will ground the City's environmental policy in data provided in the Air Quality and Health Report and will introduce an ordinance at City Council that will reform zoning related to industrial and polluting uses, establish an Environmental Equity Working Group, and further reform regulations related to air pollution.

"Time and time again, we've seen the failure of trickle-down economics, which has led us further and further away from creating a healthy, equitable, economic environment," said Mayor Lightfoot. "This new initiative will work hand in glove with our ongoing commitment to ensure public safety by addressing the unequal burden of pollution that communities of color on our city's South and West Sides face while also creating create good, sustainable jobs in neighborhoods that need them the most."

The new agenda is rooted in data from the [Air Quality and Health Report](#), which was created by the Chicago Department of Public Health. In the report the Department looked at both pollution levels and under-lying social and health equity issues faced by communities. The Department found that air quality issues like ozone and particulate matter remain a challenge citywide. However, communities facing inequities like poverty and unemployment are more likely to experience poor health outcomes – making efforts to mitigate air pollution, which can increase risk for or exacerbate chronic conditions, especially important. The data from this report helped to inform improvements in the City's environmental inspection and enforcement by prioritizing impacted communities and strengthening requirements for permitting and operation of polluting industries. The City will also use this data—measured over time—to determine where and how we can ensure an



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appropriate balance of industrial economic growth, environmental quality, and good jobs.

“These air quality reforms are a needed step to promote the greater health of Chicago’s residents,” said Department of Public Health Commissioner Allison Arwady, M.D. “As the Air Quality and Health Report makes clear, Chicago’s residents face inequitable burdens from air pollution based on neighborhood characteristics. By focusing on the communities at greatest risk, the changes described in the report will help prevent chronic disease and, ultimately, move us toward closing those inequities.”

The air quality agenda also includes an ordinance that changes the City’s Zoning Code to amend where manufacturing and other polluting sites may be located throughout the city. These changes will ensure that the economic activity provided by industrial and manufacturing uses will remain sufficiently separated from residences and small businesses. The ordinance will be introduced at the September City Council meeting and will be voted upon in October.

“These air quality reforms are a long-time coming and a major step in the right direction, especially for communities like mine that have historically been exposed to high levels of air pollution caused by heavy industrial activity and around-the-clock diesel trucking,” said Alderman George Cardenas (12th Ward). “As Chairman of the Committee on Environmental Protection and Energy, I have worked relentlessly to revamp our permitting, enforcement and land use policies. We have a moral obligation to reduce health disparities across minority communities and incorporate environmental and public health impacts into the fabric of all our planning and land use decisions, and I look forward to continuing to work with Mayor Lightfoot to bring Chicago to the forefront of sustainable and responsible environmental practices.”

The administration’s air quality agenda will also overhaul existing rules relating to industrial operations that produce air pollution, analyze the cumulative burden of polluting uses through a new regulatory process, and strengthen how air pollution enforcement and inspection operates. The Lightfoot Administration already overhauled the [large recycling rules that regulate facilities like General Iron](#). These rules went into effect on June 5, 2020 and require recyclers to mitigate dust and pollution and to monitor air and noise produced at the facility. These are now a condition for continued permitting of facilities and are enforceable through CDPH citations, and operational facilities have been given a set period of time to come into compliance with major requirements, such as air monitoring.



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“On behalf of the Mayor, I am proud to help lead this initiative along with CDPH and to stand with the members of City Council and our community leaders who have already led on air quality issues in their own neighborhoods,” said Chief Sustainability Officer Angela Tovar. “This Report lays out a clear vision for air quality reforms, including amendments to the City’s Zoning Code, its existing air pollution rules, as well as the air pollution inspection and enforcement system. We can, and we must, find a way to mitigate the pollution issues faced by our most environmentally overburdened and historically underserved communities and work to improve our environment overall.”

Finally, in order to harness the world-class expertise and community voices that can inform this agenda, the City will also be creating the Environmental Equity Working Group, which will serve as a platform of community representatives, environmental leaders, and other local stakeholders who will advise the Chief Sustainability Officer and the administration in pursuit of its environmental reform agenda.

“This essential report will hopefully serve as the catalyst for the City of Chicago to view land-use, zoning, and permitting with an environmental justice lens,” said Martha Torres Allen, Southside Coalition to Ban Petcoke.

These changes come as the City continues working with stakeholders and community members to create a more equitable and environmentally friendly Chicago. The City is currently planning community meetings to discuss these upcoming changes with community members on the Southeast side in addition to providing updates on the upcoming merger between RMG and General Iron. To participate residents can join the zoom call directly or view the town hall live from the CDPH Twitter and Facebook pages. For more information about the City’s work to address environmental concerns please visit [Chicago.gov/CDPH](https://chicago.gov/CDPH).

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