

“... millionaires and billionaires aren't used to losing. So I think that they're

feeling it now. That is not enough if you can have organized money, but we have organized people. And in this case, enough organized people to win, to prevent this relocation.”

— Olga Bautista, Organizer, Southeast Environmental Task Force, Chicago

"When we go outside and it smells like death [we] have no choice... we are constantly breathing it in."

*Calumet Corridor Resident*



# Timeline Highlights: “Organizing for Environmental Health and Justice: Lessons From #StopGeneralIron”

Jim Bloyd DrPH MPH (he/him) Collaborative for Health Equity Cook County; Health & Power Organizing Project

February 13, 2025 8:00 a.m.

Cook County Health/Northwestern Preventive Medicine Residency Program--Grand Rounds

*Please scan, scroll down to Chapter 19—free, share and post.*

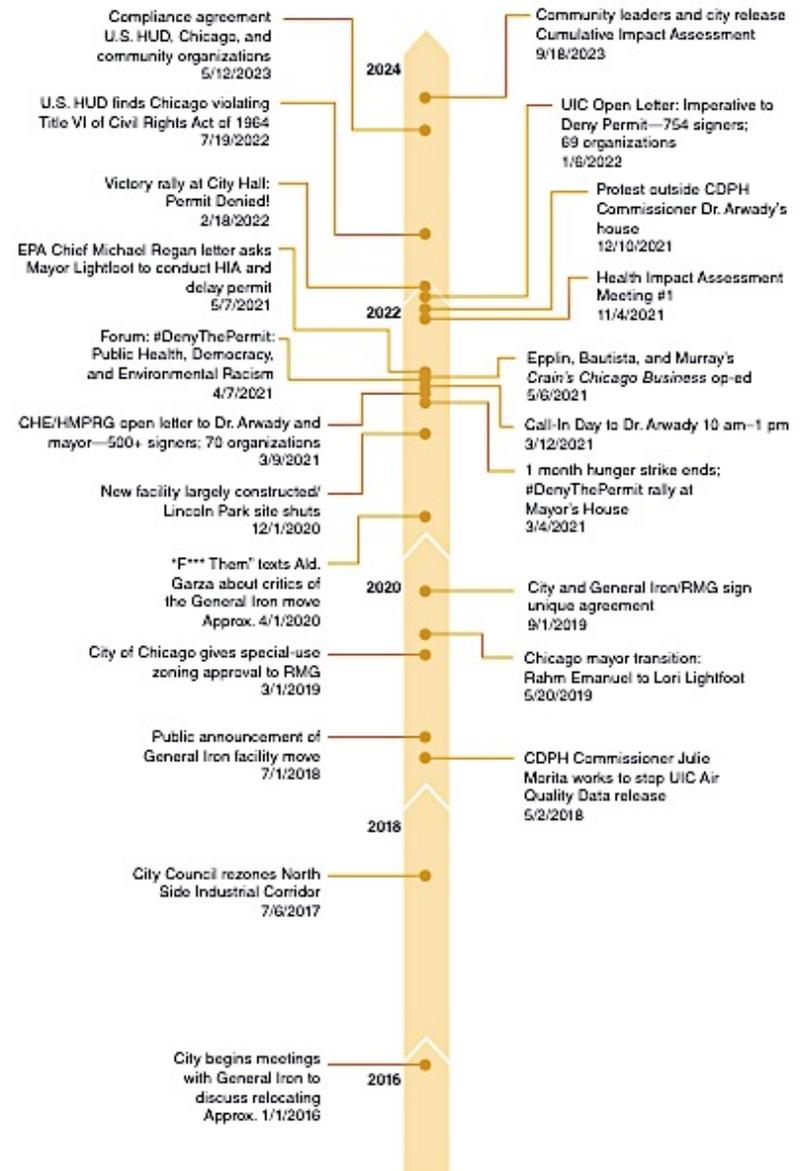
Bit.ly/EnvHealthText



# We are following this timeline today for selected highlights

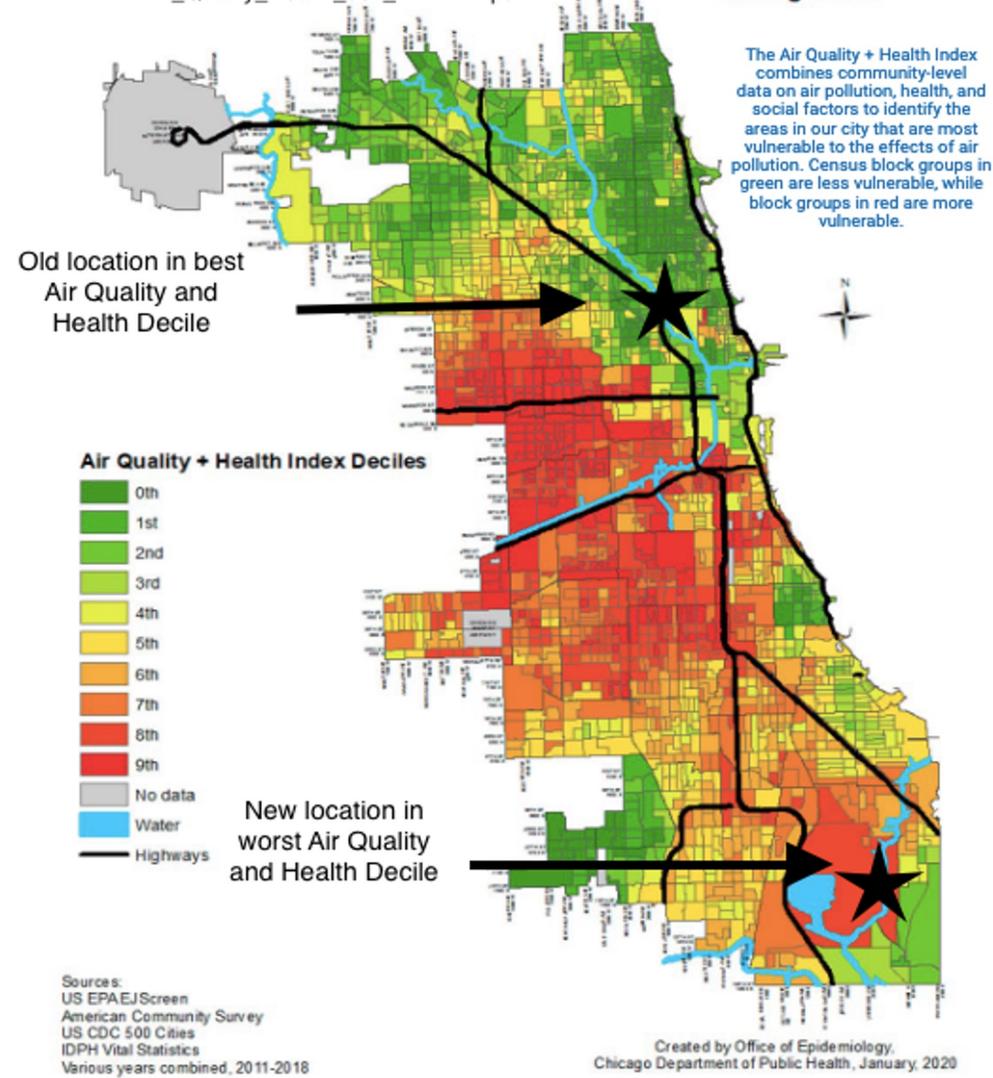
Source: Bloyd, J. (2024). Organizing for Environmental Health and Justice: Lessons from #StopGeneralIron. In N. Sampson, T. Lindsay, & N. DeJarnett (Eds.) *Environmental Health: Foundations for Public Health* (1st ed., pp. 445-469). Springer.

Graphic Source: Modified p7 of City of Chicago. (2020). *Air Quality and Health Report*. City of Chicago. [https://www.chicago.gov/content/dam/city/depts/cdph/statistics\\_and\\_reports/Air\\_Quality\\_Health\\_doc\\_FINALv4.pdf](https://www.chicago.gov/content/dam/city/depts/cdph/statistics_and_reports/Air_Quality_Health_doc_FINALv4.pdf)



**FIGURE 19.2.** Abbreviated timeline of events in the struggle to #StopGeneralIron. CDPH, Chicago Department of Public Health; CHE, Collaborative for Health Equity; EPA, Environmental Protection Agency; HIA, Health Impact Assessment; HMPRG, Health and Medicine Policy Research Group; HUD, Department of Housing and Urban Development; RMG, Reserve Management Group; UIC, International Union of Railways.

Source CDPH 2020 [https://www.chicago.gov/content/dam/city/depts/cdph/statistics\\_and\\_reports/Air\\_Quality\\_Health\\_doc\\_FINALv4.pdf](https://www.chicago.gov/content/dam/city/depts/cdph/statistics_and_reports/Air_Quality_Health_doc_FINALv4.pdf) **Air Quality and Health Index, Chicago 2020**



# WHO IS THE 'WE' ?

*“Winning requires a ‘we,’ a community, a group, an organization. And transformative change, in the face of powerful forces, requires a fight.” (Jobin-Leeds 2016)*



**Student Voice Committee**

Southeast Side  
Educators for  
Environmental  
Justice



Partial list



Read interviews with 4  
#StopGenerallIron organizers and  
2 health justice organizers



Olga Bautista



Cheryl Johnson



Gina Ramirez



Oscar Sanchez



Wesley Epplin



Sophia Simon-Ortiz



*Scroll down to Chapter 19—  
free, share and post.*

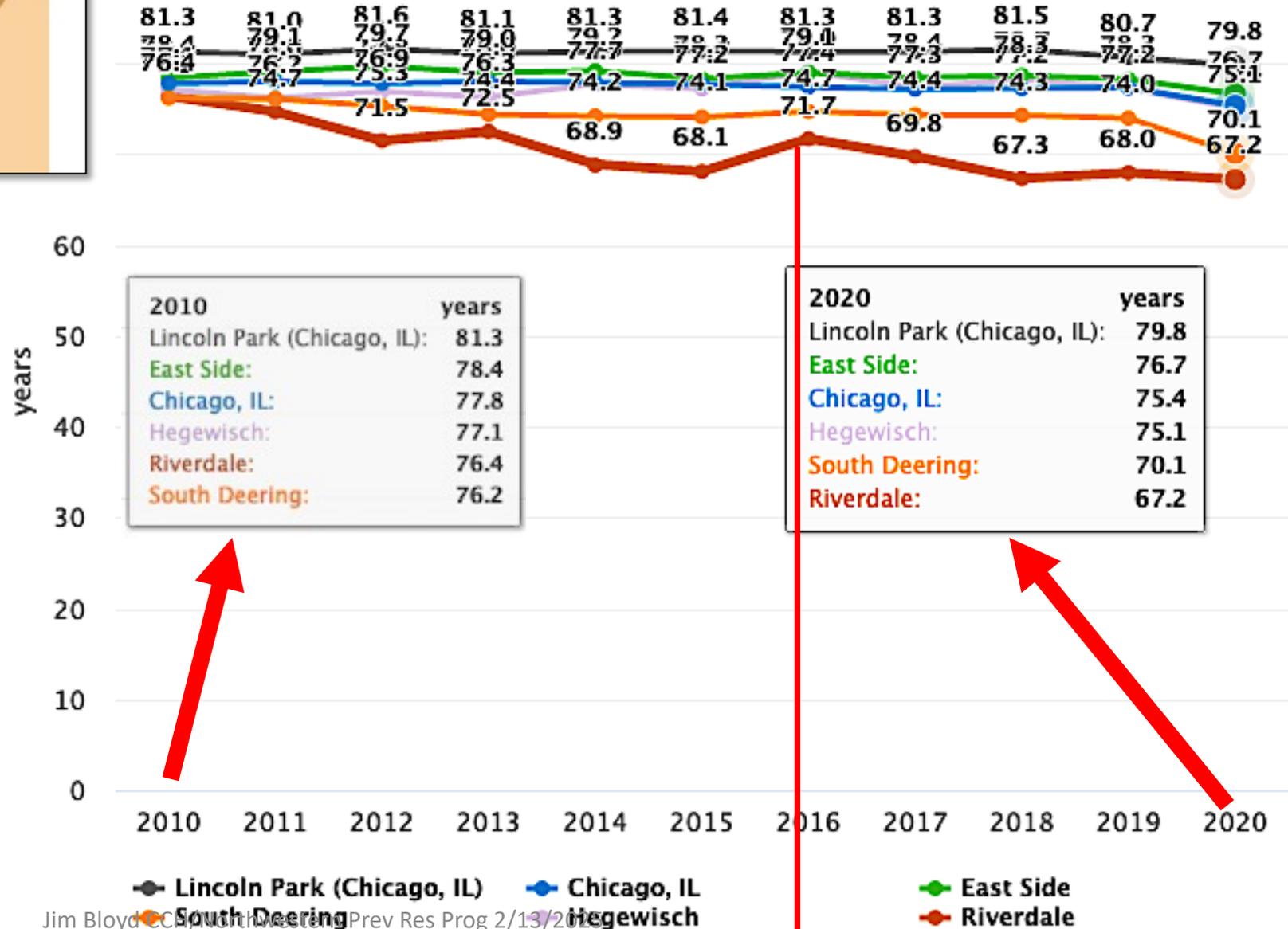
[Bit.ly/EnvHealthText](https://bit.ly/EnvHealthText)

City begins meetings with General Iron to discuss relocating  
Approx. 1/1/2016

2016

In 2016—as Chicago officials began the process of relocating the polluter General Iron from Lincoln Park to the South Side--the **unforgiveable and preventable life expectancy gap between privileged Lincoln Park and southern Chicago community areas** like Riverdale, South Deering and Hegewisch continued.

## Life expectancy Lincoln Park (Chicago, IL) and comparison

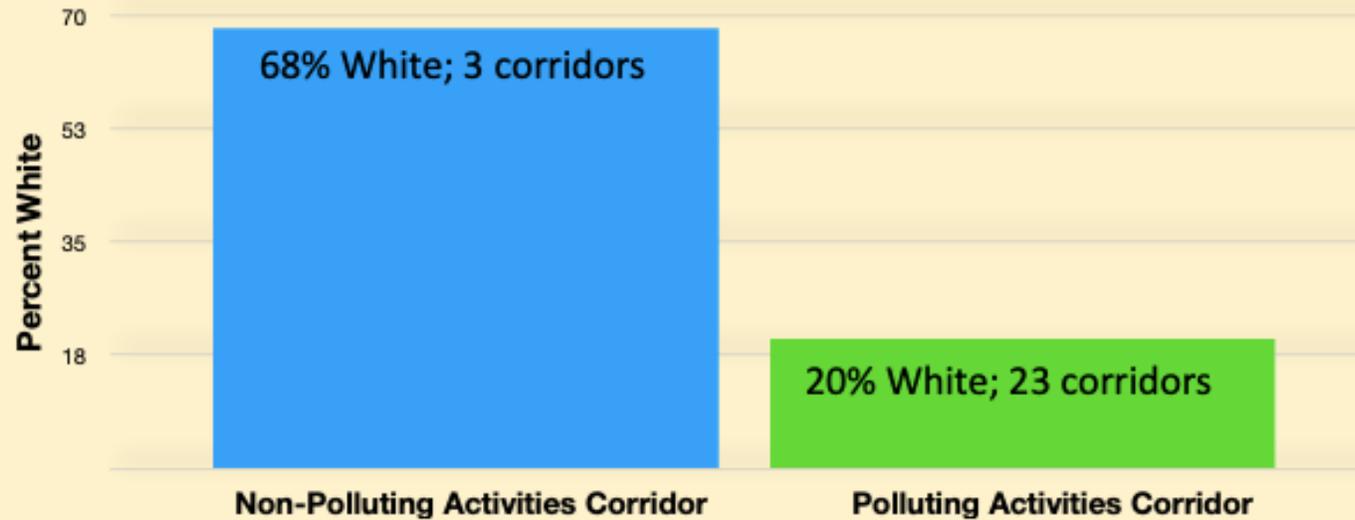


Graphic: Chicago Health Atlas

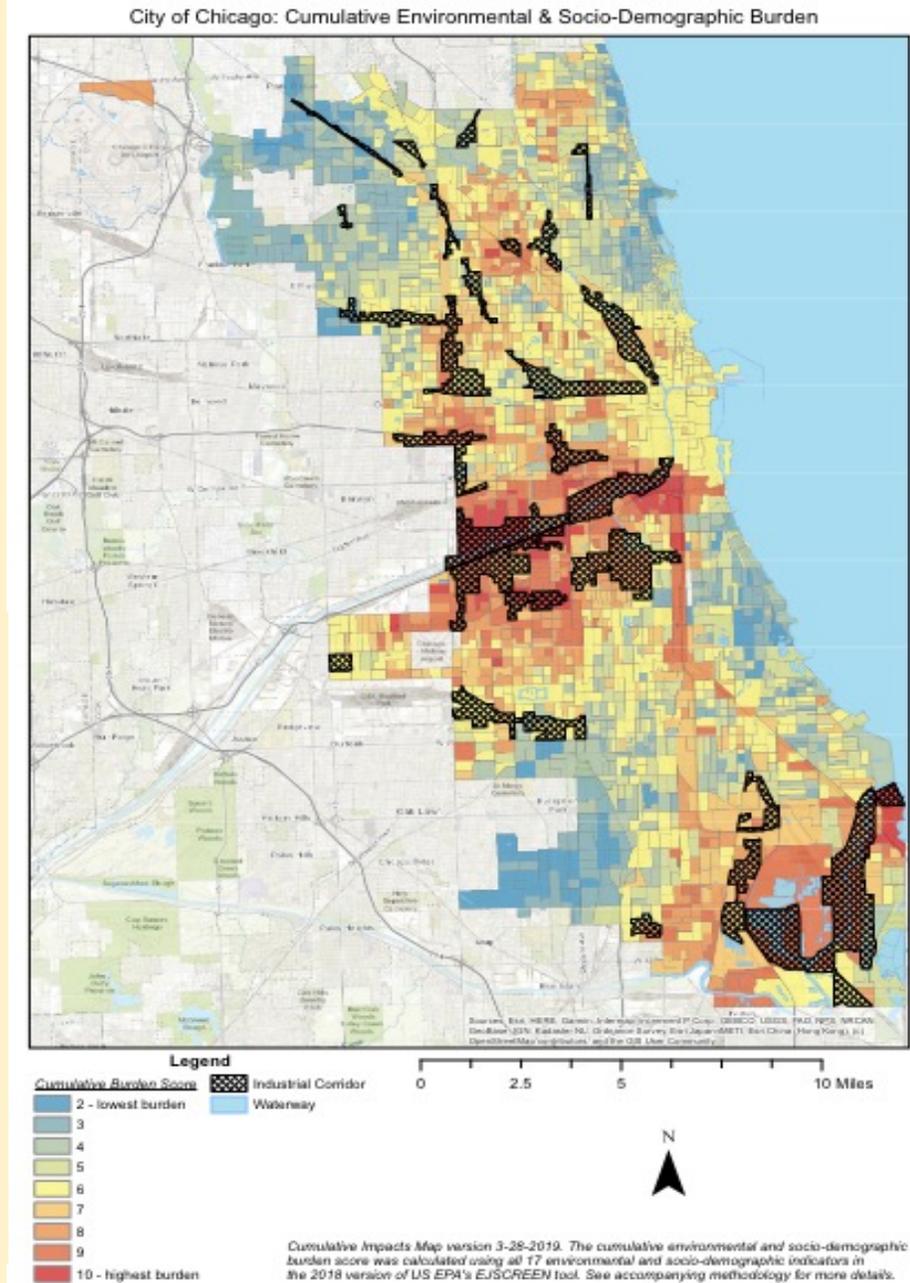
City Council rezones North Side Industrial Corridor  
7/6/2017

Natural Resources Defense Council. (2019). *Cumulative Impacts Map version 3-28-2019: City of Chicago: Cumulative Environmental & Socio-Demographic Burden* [Map].  
<https://www.nrdc.org/sites/default/files/chicago-map-environmental-burden.pdf>

US HUD: Chicago 2016 policy zoned Corridors where Black & Hispanic people lived as “receiving areas” for “traditional industrial activities.” This zoning was found to violate the US Civil Rights Act of 1964,



Sources: Gaige, J., & US Department of Housing and Urban Development. (2022, July 19). *Letter of Findings of Noncompliance with Title VI and Section 109 Southeast Environmental Task Force, et al. V. City of Chicago Case No. 05-20-0419-6/8/9*.  
[https://www.hud.gov/sites/dfiles/Main/documents/Letter\\_of\\_Finding\\_05-20-0419\\_City\\_of\\_Chicago.pdf](https://www.hud.gov/sites/dfiles/Main/documents/Letter_of_Finding_05-20-0419_City_of_Chicago.pdf) p. 14 histogram data; p2 quotation)



From: Julie Morita  
Sent: Wednesday, May 02, 2018 11:42 AM  
To: David Reifman <[David.Reifman@cityofchicago.org](mailto:David.Reifman@cityofchicago.org)>  
Cc: Robert Rivkin <[Robert.Rivkin@cityofchicago.org](mailto:Robert.Rivkin@cityofchicago.org)>  
Subject: RE: General Iron Expose

Good morning.

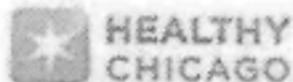
I have scheduled a meeting with the researchers for tomorrow afternoon. They have yet to confirm.



**“I will be following up with the UIC Dean of the UIC School of Public Health...The researcher is very connected to the environmental advocacy groups and is not someone I can reason with...You may need to engage the Chancellor if you want this to be stopped.”**

Julie Morita MD, Commissioner, Chicago Department of Public Health, May 1-2, 2018 e-mails to David Reifman, Commissioner of Planning and Development, and Robert Rivkin, Deputy Mayor

Chicago Department of Public Health  
333 S. State Street, Suite 200  
Chicago, IL 60604  
312-747-9870



Source: Hawthorne, M. (2020). Five Julie Morita Emails 2018. *Chicago Tribune*. Retrieved from <https://www.documentcloud.org/documents/6772921-2018-5-Julie-Morita-Emails.html> ; Hawthorne, M. (2020, February 11). Lightfoot cracks down on North Side scrap shredder, suggesting the chronic polluter's clout at City Hall is evaporating. *Chicago Tribune*. <https://www.chicagotribune.com/2020/02/11/lightfoot-cracks-down-on-north-side-scrap-shredder-suggesting-the-chronic-polluters-clout-at-city-hall-is-evaporating/>

# Michael Hawthorne Chicago Tribune

“The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency began investigating the company in 2017 after a University of Illinois at Chicago researcher found high levels of lung-damaging particulate matter downwind from General Iron. The researcher was enlisted by a Lincoln Park man who said he was fed up with the city’s tepid response to neighborhood concerns about the facility.”

Hawthorne, M. (2019, July 3). *Emanuel administration quietly extended scrap shredder’s North Side permit for 3 years*. Chicago Tribune. <https://www.chicagotribune.com/news/environment/ct-general-iron-pollution-rahm-emanuel-20190702-w7sla352cjgknbs7jnlcmrsxvi-w7sla352cjgknbs7jnlcmrsxvi-story.html>

2018 CDPH Commissioner Julie Morita works to stop UIC Air Quality Data release 5/2/2018



**\$\$\$ from General Iron**

Rahm Emanuel, Former Mayor City of Chicago

**General Iron (Labkon family) political donations - Mayor top recipient of \$500k (Hawthorne 3/11/2020)**



David L. Reifman JD  
Former Commissioner of Planning and Development



Julie Morita, MD Former Commissioner CDPH  
**FINAL PERMIT SIGNATURE**



Robert S. Rivkin  
Former Deputy Mayor, City of Chicago

Source: Hawthorne, M. (2020). **Five Julie Morita Emails 2018. Chicago Tribune**. Retrieved from <https://www.documentcloud.org/documents/6772921-2018-5-Julie-Morita-Emails.html>

Who was the researcher Dr. Morita referred to?

# Neighborhood PM2.5 Sampling Results and Analysis October-November, 2016

Serap Erdal, Ph.D.<sup>1</sup>, Victoria Persky, M.D.<sup>2</sup>, Frank Pagone, M.Sc.<sup>1</sup>

University of Illinois at Chicago, School of Public Health  
<sup>1</sup>Division of Environmental and Occupational Health Sciences  
<sup>2</sup>Division of Epidemiology and Biostatistics



Serap Erdal, PhD



Victoria Persky, MD  
PhD



Frank Pagnone, PhD CIH

## “Neighborhood 2.5 Sampling Results and Analysis October-November, 2016” [6 Slides]

### Neighborhood Sampling Sites



**Location M**  
1765 N. Elston Ave., Chicago, IL  
60642



**Location O**  
1363 W. Cortland St., Chicago, IL  
60614



**Location L**  
1930 N. Clybourn Ave., Chicago,  
IL 60614

TABLE 1. SUMMARY OF 24-HOUR AVERAGE PM2.5 CONCENTRATIONS MEASURED AT THREE NEIGHBORHOOD LOCATIONS AND COMPARISON OF NEIGHBORHOOD PM2.5 CONCENTRATION DATA TO THOSE MEASURED BY THE EPA AT TWO CLOSEST AIR MONITORING LOCATIONS

Sampling Date	Measured 24-h Average PM2.5 Conc. at Station L (µg/m <sup>3</sup> )	Measured 24-h Average PM2.5 Conc. at Station M (µg/m <sup>3</sup> )	Measured 24-h Average PM2.5 Conc. at Station O (µg/m <sup>3</sup> )	% Change in Average PM2.5 Conc. at Station M vs. Station L	% Change in Average PM2.5 Conc. at Station O vs. Station L	Measured 24-h Average PM2.5 FRM Conc. at EPA's Springfield Pump Station (µg/m <sup>3</sup> )	% Change in 24-h Average PM2.5 Conc. at Station L as compared to that at the EPA's Springfield Pump Station	Measured 24-h Average PM2.5 FRM Conc. at EPA's Mayfair Pump Station (µg/m <sup>3</sup> )	% Change in 24-h Average PM2.5 Conc. at Station L as compared to that at the EPA's Mayfair Pump Station
10/9/16	12.7	8.8	9.9	44.9	28.3	9.0	41	8.6	48
10/12/16	14.1	14.1	15.4	0.4	-7.9			11.3	25
10/15/16	10.0	10.6	10.6	-6.4	-6.4	9.3	7	10.1	-1
10/18/16	14.3	12.1	12.9	18.3	11.2			9.1	57
10/21/16	4.7	3.5	3.5	36.0	32.3	3.8	23	AN	AN
10/24/16	5.9	4.9	3.4	21.1	74.2			AN	AN
10/27/16	7.5	5.6	5.8	33.9	30.3	3.7	103	4.1	83
10/30/16	2.6	2.0	2.2	29.1	17.3			2.2	18
11/2/16	19.9	18.8	19.0	5.8	4.9	19.9	0	17.9	11
11/5/16	14.9	13.2	13.1	13.6	14.3			11.5	30

Notes:

- 1) "AN" indicates not available data from the EPA PM2.5 FRM monitor due to instrument malfunction.
- 2) All the positive numbers in % change columns indicate an increase in PM2.5 concentration at station L as compared to the other stations.
- 3) All the negative numbers (shown in red -- in four instances) in % change columns indicate a decrease in PM2.5 concentration at station L as compared to the other stations.
- 4) Neighborhood air monitoring site, L, is closest to the General Iron facility. Station L is approximately 650 feet east of the facility.
- 5) In the above table, percent change calculations were performed for the closest site to the facility, Station L, in comparison to a) the other neighborhood stations (yellow and green highlighted columns) and b) EPA stations (blue and orange highlighted columns).
- 6) EPA's Springfield Pump Station site is the closest EPA air monitoring station to the General Iron facility and the three neighborhood air monitoring stations (L, M and O). EPA performs air monitoring at this station on once-every-six day schedule. We also examined the data collected at EPA's Mayfair Pump Station air monitoring site because the PM2.5 sampling at this site is performed on more frequent basis, i.e., once in every three days.
- 7) Sampling dates are as follows: 10/9/16 -- Sunday; 10/12/16 -- Wednesday; 10/15/16 -- Saturday; 10/18/16 -- Tuesday; 10/21/16 -- Friday; 10/24/16 -- Monday; 10/27/16 -- Thursday; 10/30/16 -- Sunday; 11/2/16 -- Wednesday; 11/5/16 -- Saturday.
- 8) The USEPA's 24-hour Average National Ambient Air Quality Standard (NAAQS) for PM2.5 is 35 µg/m<sup>3</sup>.
- 9) Frank Pagone, a doctoral student of Prof. Erdal, performed the air sampling at the three neighborhood sites with guidance and supervision from Dr. Erdal.



- City and General Iron/RMG sign unique agreement  
9/1/2019
- Chicago mayor transition:  
Rahm Emanuel to Lori Lightfoot  
5/20/2019



City of Chicago gives special-use zoning approval to RMG  
3/1/2019

Public announcement of General Iron facility move  
7/1/2018



RMG built this \$80 million metal-shredding facility on the Southeast Side. It claims in a court filing that the company it would get an operating permit. | Provided

Photo: Chicago Sun-Times, provided

New facility largely constructed/  
Lincoln Park site shuts  
12/1/2020

“F\*\*\* Them” texts Ald.  
Garza about critics of  
the General Iron move  
Approx. 4/1/2020

In April 2020, Ald. Susan Sadlowski Garza texted Lightfoot about a contentious call she had with environmentalists who told her they would be coming after her for allowing controversial polluter General Iron to move to the 10th Ward.

“They disseminate the wrong information They dont play well with others So F--- them,” Garza texted.

“I am riding with you til the end!” Lightfoot responded.

Pratt, G. (2021, December 10). Scolding, swearing, sarcasm: Mayor Lori Lightfoot’s texts reveal her combative dealings with aldermen. Chicago Tribune (Online); Tribune Publishing Company, LLC. <https://www.proquest.com/chicagotribune/docview/2608479522/citation/C703DDEA6CFE4A0FPQ/146> ; Chase, B. (2021, June 18). *General Iron says it could have stayed in Lincoln Park, but city encouraged it to move to the Southeast Side despite federal probe.* Chicago Sun-Times. <https://chicago.suntimes.com/2021/6/17/22539362/general-iron-lincoln-park-lori-lightfoot-southeast-side>

1 month hunger strike ends;  
#DenyThePermit rally at  
Mayor's House  
3/4/2021



America's dirty divide  
Pollution

This article is more than 1 year old

## The Chicago plant that sparked a hunger strike amid environmental racism claims

ds the Block the Permit block party in front of Mayor Lori Lightfoot's house in Logan Square, Chicago, in November 2020. Photograph: Oscar

ianchez

@isaiahsarju

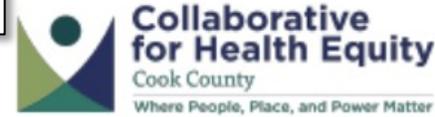
oyd CCH/Northwestern Prev Res Prog 2/13/21

Photo Credit (Left) Isaiah Sarju @Isaiah;  
(Above) Oscar Sanchez.

CHE/HMPRG open letter to Dr. Arwady and  
mayor—500+ signers; 70 organizations  
3/9/2021

*“We demand that CDPH  
follow its own  
community health  
improvement plan  
'Healthy Chicago 2025'  
and prioritize  
environmental justice,  
racial equity, and health  
equity in its actions.”*

Signed by over 70 organizations & over 500 individuals



Health & Medicine  
POLICY RESEARCH GROUP  
40 years advancing health equity

Cover Letter

March 8, 2021

To:

Honorable Lori Lightfoot, Chicago Mayor  
Dr. Allison Arwady, Commissioner, Chicago Department of Public Health (CDPH)  
Candace Moore, Chief Equity Officer, City of Chicago  
Megan Cunningham, Managing Deputy Commissioner, CDPH  
Genese Turner, Director, Health Equity and Strategic Partnerships, CDPH  
Sandi Brown, Chief Racial Equity Officer, CDPH

Please find attached/enclosed the letter circulated by [Health & Medicine Policy Research Group](#) and the [Collaborative for Health Equity Cook County](#) and signed by over 500 public health and healthcare workers, students, community activists, and over 70 national and local organizations demanding that the City of Chicago take decisive action to deny the permit to relocate the General Iron/Reserve Management Group (RMG) scrap metal recycling facility to the Southeast Side of Chicago.

CHE/HMPRG open letter to Dr. Arwady and mayor—500+ signers; 70 organizations  
3/9/2021



SEE YOUR CARFAX TRADE-IN VALUE TOP DOLLAR PAID ON YOUR TRADE WE WILL BUY YOURS EVEN IF YOU DON'T BUY OURS! HAGGERTY

ENVIRONMENT NEWS POLITICS

### Dozens of health care, social justice groups demand Lightfoot deny General Iron permit

About 500 individuals and more than 70 organizations sent the mayor a letter urging her to halt the metal shredder's opening on the Southeast Side. A Rush doctor calls the matter a "textbook example of environmental racism."

By Brett Chase | Updated Mar 9, 2021, 8:50pm CST

SHARE



A protester marches to demand Chicago Mayor Lori Lightfoot to deny the final permit that will allow General Iron to move from Lincoln Park, a mostly white neighborhood, to the Southeast Side. | Pat Nabong/Sun-Times

## Chicago health leaders urge city officials to scrap South Side recycling plant

### Chicago health leaders urge city to scrap South Side recycling plant

2 minutes left

Collaborative for Health Equity  
March 8, 2021

To: Honorable Lori Lightfoot, Chicago Mayor  
Dr. Allison Arwady, Commissioner, Chicago Department of Public Health (CDPH)  
Cristina Morán, Chief Equity Officer, City of Chicago  
Miguel Cunningham, Managing Deputy Commissioner, CDPH  
Genevieve Turner, Director, Health Equity and Strategic Partnerships, CDPH  
Sandi Brown, Chief Racial Equity Officer, CDPH

Please find attached a letter to the Mayor, translated by Health & Medicine Policy Research Group and the Collaborative for Health Equity. It is signed by over 500 public health and healthcare workers, students, community members, and other regional and local organizations demanding that the City of Chicago take decisive action to: 1) halt the General Iron/Reserve Management Group (IRMG) scrap metal recycling facility on the Southeast Side of Chicago.

This open letter in support of demands to close the General Iron/IRMG facility and in support of Chicago Hunger Strike demands the City release the health plan, Healthy Chicago 2032. Those that have signed onto the letter include community and individuals from across the City, national leaders in public health, social justice and advocacy and includes many who worked to produce the City's Health Plan.

Below is a listing of some who have signed onto the letter:

- Eleven organizations that are members of the Partnership for Healthy Chicago have signed, as well as many recognized individual leaders and partners:
  - Chicagoand Equity Network, Health & Medicine Policy Research Group, Heartland Alliance, Illinois Community Health Worker Association, Sinai Urban Health Institute, Public Health Institute of Metropolitan Chicago, Natural Resources Defense Council, NAMI Chicago, Metropolitan Planning Council, UIC School of Public Health Collaborative for Health Justice, and Metropolitan Tenants Organization
- Local and National recognized public health, social service and advocacy organizations and leaders have signed onto the letter. They include Human Impact Partners, National Association of Social Workers, Illinois Chapter, Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America, Brian Smedley PhD, Co Editor of the JOM landmark Report: Unequal Treatment, Linda Rae Murray, MD, N Past President of APHA, Steven K. Rothchild, MD, member of the Chicago Board of Health David Aronoff, MD, MPH, Rush University Medical Center

Chicago para evitar que se otorgue el

esa Lori Lightfoot y a funcionarios del Departamento de Salud Pública radadora de metal al sureste de la ciudad, argumentando daños nante ver cómo Lightfoot nos ha ignorado. Nos decepciona no tener

# Media Coverage of March 8, 2021 Health Community #DenyThePermit Public Letter of March 8, 2021

Call TODAY Friday, 10 am - 1 pm  
#DenyThePermit Virtual Action:  
Demand Dr. Allison Arwady Deny the Permit

Health & Medicine  
POLICY RESEARCH GROUP  
40 years advancing health equity

Collaborative  
for Health Equity  
Cook County  
Where People, Place, and Power Matter

**ACTION ALERT: CALL FRIDAY  
10AM- 1PM**

**Call Dr. Allison Arwady,  
Commissioner of Public Health to  
demand that she #DenyThePermit**

Dr. Arwady: (312) 747-9872

*Dr. Arwady, my name is \_\_\_\_\_. I am calling today to demand that you deny the permit to General Iron. Follow your own data. Fulfill your commitments to Healthy Chicago 2025 and the Air Quality and Health report. This facility would worsen the air quality and health inequities on the Southeast Side. You have the power to deny the permit and an obligation to protect public health. Deny the Permit.*

Forum: #DenyThePermit:  
Public Health, Democracy,  
and Environmental Racism  
4/7/2021

Call-In Day to Dr. Arwady 10 am–1 pm  
3/12/2021



Wesley Epplin, Olga Bautista, Linda Rae Murray, MD, MPH, FACP (L to R), March 9, 2021 Crain's Chicago Business Op-Ed.

*“Chicago officials should fight against the racist structuring of health risks rather than participating in its creation.”*

## **CRAIN'S** CHICAGO BUSINESS

Lightfoot and Arwady must decide on which side of history they will be on when this case study of environmental racism is written. A broken permitting process—that absolutely must be fixed—is no excuse for worsening environmental racism in the here and now. **Chicago officials should fight against the racist structuring of health risks rather than participating in its creation.**

— Epplin, Bautista, and Murray's *Crain's Chicago Business* op-ed 5/6/2021

**High school students** protested December 10, 2021, at public health Commissioner Arwady's Lincoln Park house. Four adult leaders (shown) were arrested at the peaceful demonstration. [Credit: Isaiah Sarju @IsaiahSarju ]



Protest outside CDPH  
Commissioner Dr. Arwady's  
house  
12/10/2021



UNIVERSITY OF  
**ILLINOIS CHICAGO**

---

**COLLABORATORY FOR HEALTH JUSTICE**

UIC Open Letter: Imperative to  
Deny Permit—754 signers;  
69 organizations  
1/6/2022

January 6, 2022.

To:

Honorable Lori Lightfoot, Chicago Mayor

Dr. Allison Arwady, Commissioner, Chicago Department of Public Health (CDPH)

Candace Moore, Chief Equity Officer, City of Chicago

**Subject: RMG/Southside Recycling Permit Application and the Imperative to Deny the Permit**

We, undersigned organizations, and individuals, write to you as your public health colleagues to communicate to you and the Chicago Department of Public Health (CDPH) our insistence that **the permit application for the RMG/Southside Recycling, which acquired the assets of General Iron in Lincoln Park in the fall of 2019, be denied.** The well documented excess burden of pollution already experienced by residents living in Southeast Chicago is strong enough evidence against a permit for the RMG/Southside Recycling's facility in the Southeast Side. **The decision to issue the permit would be in direct opposition to the shared vision to close the racial life expectancy gap in Chicago that we as public health professionals have committed to in Healthy Chicago 2025** which envisions a city where all people and all communities are empowered, free from oppression, and strengthened by **equitable access to resources, environments and opportunities that promote optimal health and well-being.**

Health Impact Assessment  
Meeting #1  
11/4/2021

EPA Chief Michael Regan letter asks  
Mayor Lightfoot to conduct HIA and  
delay permit  
5/7/2021

Victory rally at City Hall:  
Permit Denied!  
2/18/2022

Gina Ramirez at  
City Hall Rally



Gina Ramirez, who fought against allowing a metal recycling yard on Chicago's Southeast Side, speaks outside the County Building on Clark Street in Chicago on Feb. 18, 2022, after it was announced that the Chicago Department of Public Health (CDPH) denied the recycler's permit application to operate. (Terrence Antonio James / Chicago Tribune)

*"This is what environmental justice looks like."*

Michael Regan, Administrator EPA, February 18, 2022

US EPA, O. (2022, February 18). *Statement from Administrator Regan on RMG Permit Denial by the City of Chicago* [News Release]. <https://www.epa.gov/newsreleases/statement-administrator-regan-rmg-permit-denial-city-chicago>

General Iron

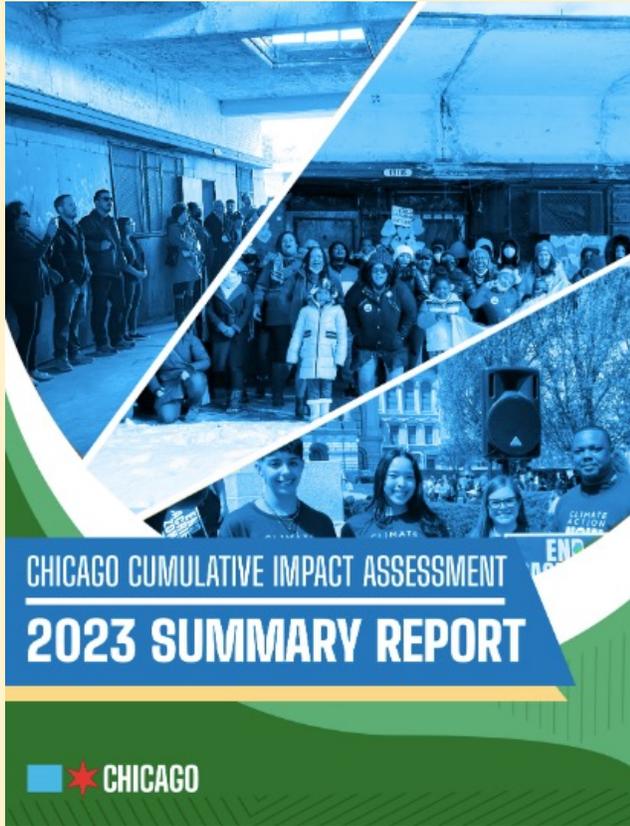
**DENIED**

Permit

*"... millionaires and billionaires aren't used to losing. So I think that they're feeling it now. That is not enough if you can have organized money, but we have organized people. And in this case, enough organized people to win, to prevent this relocation."*

— Olga Bautista, Organizer, Southeast Environmental Task Force

Jim Bloyd CCH/Northwestern Prev Res Prog 2/13/2025



Community leaders and city release  
Cumulative Impact Assessment  
9/18/2023

Compliance agreement  
U.S. HUD, Chicago, and  
community organizations  
5/12/2023

U.S. HUD finds Chicago violating  
Title VI of Civil Rights Act of 1964  
7/19/2022

*"...shall be used by the Mayor's Office and all City departments and offices to inform decision-making in policy areas such as land use and zoning, transportation, permitting, enforcement, and other interventions that consider the burdens of existing and proposed intensive industrial operations and better protect Environmental Justice Neighborhoods, as described in the Environmental Justice Action Plan."*

[https://www.chicago.gov/content/dam/city/depts/cdph/environment/CumulativeImpact/oct-update/CIA\\_ExecutiveSummary\\_9.17.23\\_v3.pdf](https://www.chicago.gov/content/dam/city/depts/cdph/environment/CumulativeImpact/oct-update/CIA_ExecutiveSummary_9.17.23_v3.pdf)

# Read in-depth interviews with five #StopGeneralIron organizers



Thank you!

Jim Bloyd

[JimBloyd@gmail.com](mailto:JimBloyd@gmail.com)

Collaborative for Health Equity Cook County  
Health and Power Organizing Project



## CHAPTER 19

### Organizing for Environmental Health and Justice: Lessons From #StopGeneralIron

Jim Bloyd

With interviews with Olga Bautista, Wesley Epplin, Cheryl Johnson, Gina Ramirez, Oscar Sanchez, and Sophia Simon-Ortiz

#### LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Explain the basics of community organizing for health.
- Examine the role of power in community organizing and how imbalances in power contribute to environmental injustice.
- Describe the events of the #StopGeneralIron campaign as an example of community organizing for health.
- Hear lessons directly from community organizers who led the #StopGeneralIron campaign in Chicago's Southeast Side.
- Examine the role of the local and federal government in protecting environmental health.
- Illustrate how historical and recent land use, permitting, zoning, or development decisions have the potential to promote environmental health or perpetuate environmental injustice.

#### KEY TERMS

- community engagement
- community organizing
- community power
- cumulative impact
- environmental racism
- power
- structural racism

"... millionaires and billionaires aren't used to losing. So I think that they're feeling it now. That is not enough if you can have organized money, but we have organized people. And in this case, enough organized people to win, to prevent this relocation."

— Olga Bautista, Organizer, Southeast Environmental Task Force



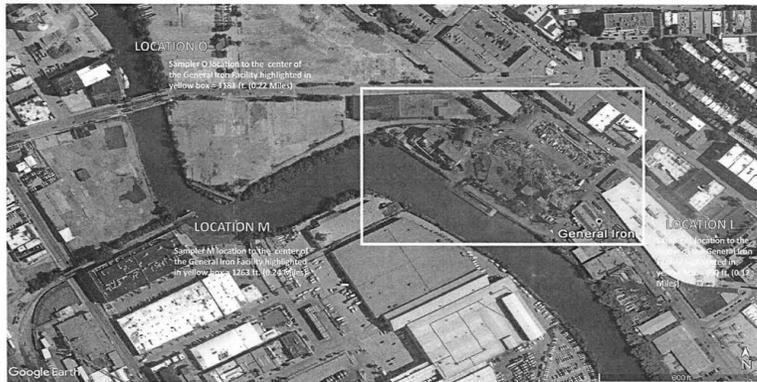
[Linktr.ee/jbloyd](https://linktr.ee/jbloyd)

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Jim Bloyd CCH/Northwestern Prev Res Prog 2/13/2025

# Erdal, et al (2017) cont.

## Map of Neighborhood Sampling Sites



## EPA and Neighborhood Site Locations



**BRIAN HOPKINS**  
ALDERMAN, 2ND WARD  
1400 N. ASHLAND AVE.  
CHICAGO, ILLINOIS 60602  
TELEPHONE: 312-643-2299  
FAX: 773-270-4673

## CITY COUNCIL

### CITY OF CHICAGO COUNCIL CHAMBER

CITY HALL - ROOM 200  
121 NORTH LA SALLE STREET  
CHICAGO, ILLINOIS 60602  
TELEPHONE: 312-744-6836  
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## COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIPS

BUDGET AND GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS  
HEALTH AND ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION  
HUMAN RELATIONS  
PROTECTION AND TRAFFIC SAFETY  
RULES AND ETHICS  
SPECIAL EVENTS, CULTURAL AFFAIRS AND RECREATION

August 21, 2017

Dr. Julie Morita  
333 S. State  
Chicago, IL 60604

Dear Dr. Morita:

On Friday, August 18, 2017 at approximately 10:35 AM, my office received reports of excessive smoke and dust emanating from General Iron Industries at 1909 N Clifton. We informed your office, photographs of a large smoke plume were immediately sent to your office via email, and I understand field inspectors were dispatched to that location in response.

Incidents of this-type are common occurrences at the facility. Excessive smoke and dust, along with tremors and vibrations from explosions, are regularly observed and reported to my office by nearby residents. Furthermore, ongoing air quality monitoring has detected levels of fugitive dust and airborne toxics known to be associated with high volume metal shredding.

An increasing body of evidence suggests that the continued operation of this facility in a densely populated residential area represents a threat to public health. I request the following steps be taken:

1. A review of the available air quality data (including reports from both public and private agencies) regarding emissions and fugitive dust to provide a baseline for near term comparison.
2. Implementation of an ongoing air quality monitoring program by your department, modeled after a monitoring program currently active in the 10<sup>th</sup> Ward.
3. An immediate revocation of the special extended operating hours granted to General Iron Industries as a privilege by your office.
4. A summary of the field inspections conducted by your office during the previous 12 month period, with a listing of all violations and the status of remedies, if any.

Thank you for your prompt attention to this important matter of public safety.

Sincerely,

Alderman Brian Hopkins

cc: The Honorable Rahm Emanuel, Mayor  
The Honorable George Cardenas, Chairman, Committee on Health and Environmental Protection

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