



Tishman Environment
and Design Center



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Tishman Center Releases Analysis on Zoning Laws and Environmental Justice

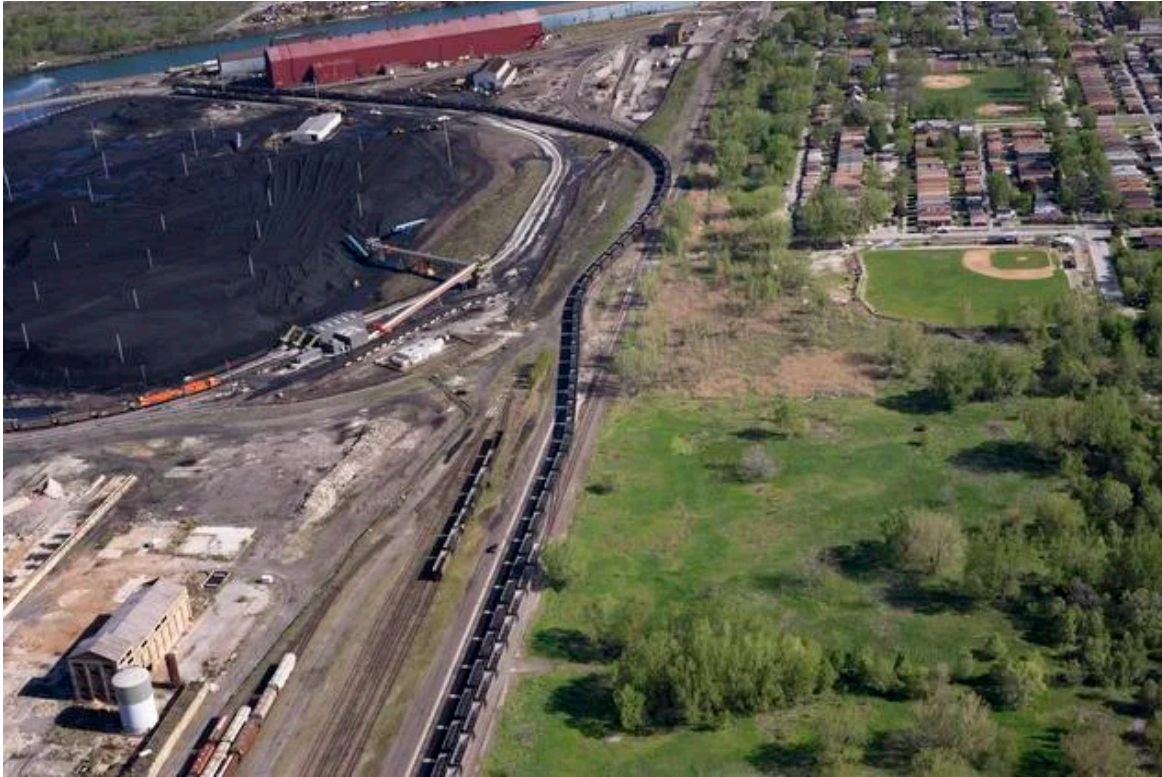
Municipal zoning laws across the country have fueled segregation and deepened environmental injustices, but grassroots organizations are now reforming zoning laws to provide protections from industrial pollution, as [detailed in a new](#)

[analysis](#) recently released by the [Tishman Environment and Design Center](#) at The New School, the [Natural Resources Defense Council \(NRDC\)](#) and commissioned by [Little Village Environmental Justice Organization](#), [Southeast Environmental Task Force](#), and [Southeast Side Coalition to Ban Petcoke](#). Forty land use and zoning policies from 23 cities, three counties, and two utilities around the country -- including policies in the county's most populated cities -- were examined to provide a national resource for communities that are tackling environmental injustices in land use policies.

"This report is a testament to the power and innovation of environmental justice communities to create local policies that advance environmental justice goals," said Ana Baptista, Assistant Professor of Professional Practice and Associate Director, Tishman Environment & Design Center.

"The dirtiest and most dangerous industries in Chicago have used zoning laws to continue accumulating near communities of color in Chicago," said Olga Bautista, Chair of the [Southeast Side Coalition to Ban Petcoke](#). "That's certainly true here in Chicago. This report is another confirmation that Chicago must take the lead now to address

the structures that enable this
burden on our health and change
zoning laws to protect our health and
not polluters' profits."



terry-evans-train-loaded-petcoke-10x6.jpg



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The report examines how low-income communities of color suffer from a legacy of racially-biased zoning and land use planning that has entrenched patterns of inequality for generations. Cities are often the epicenter of fierce conflicts that pit these communities against polluting industries and the agencies that permit them. In the past decade, many of these localities have taken steps to use their authority over local land use, planning, zoning and public health and welfare to reduce pollution and the cumulative burdens borne by environmental justice communities, spurred by the

demands of resident-advocates. “Communities across the country are charting new territory on how zoning laws can be used to protect communities,” said Maria Lopez-Nunez from [Ironbound Community Corp.](#) “This guide would’ve been very valuable to our community when we were fighting for Newark’s environmental justice ordinance. The report is a reminder of all the other communities nationwide that we are connected to in this struggle.” Given the limitations of environmental laws, local governments are often in a unique position to address environmental burdens through their local land use, planning, zoning and public health authorities. The municipal actions detailed in the report were taken in direct response to increased pressure from environmental justice advocates. “Communities fought for a vision of sustainable development and created a Green Zones model that could be used in cities across the country,” said Tiffany Eng, [California Environmental Justice Alliance Green Zones](#) Program Manager. “As this report highlights, grassroots community organizations have a lot to gain by building power with broad coalitions and connecting with communities across the country that share our struggle for environmental justice.” The policies featured in this report are models for action that can

drive local land use advocacy to policies that promote environmental justice and dismantle tools that had previously cemented racial, income and health disparities.



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