

Chicago Sustainable Development Policy Update – Technical Recommendations (Memo #2)

Purpose

The purpose of this memo is to merge key learnings and takeaways from stakeholder meetings, as summarized in Memo #1 (Stakeholder Engagement Key Learnings), along with best practices, resulting in recommended technical specifications and other implementation improvements for improving the Chicago Sustainable Development Policy.

Program Overview

Originally adopted in 2004 as a “green roof policy”, the Chicago Sustainable Development Policy (SDP) today aims to enhance the environmental sustainability of all new developments and most rehabilitation projects that receive financial assistance from the City by requiring compliance with specific environmental efficiency/mitigation measures as a condition of development approval.

The SDP was last updated in 2016 with input from an Advisory Committee comprised of professionals from the design and development industries. The Advisory Committee provided technical expertise and specific recommendations used to develop the current policy format. The updated policy allows development teams to choose from a menu of strategies that can be tailored to fit the project’s characteristics. Each strategy is assigned a point value. New construction projects are required to achieve 100 points and renovations of existing buildings are required to reach 25 or 50 points depending on the extent of the renovation. Project development teams must choose from the menu of sustainable strategies, with two compliance paths available to meet the requirements: 1) Earning the required number of points without achieving any of the listed building certifications (in other words solely through a combination of strategies), or 2) Achieve one of the listed buildings certifications and reach the remaining number of required points through additional strategies. The strategies in the menu are categorized as follows: Health, Energy, Stormwater, Landscapes, Green Roofs, Water, Transportation, Solid Waste, Work Force and Wildlife. Developers are not required to meet strategies from each of the categories.

Key Limitations

Key limitations of the policy have been identified as follows:

- Not tied to specific policy objective/outcomes
- Some categories are not as expansive or flexible as others
 - For example- the Health category is limited to one “all-or-nothing” strategy option (achieving the WELL Building Standard™), compared to Energy which has a few strategy options to choose from as well as performance tiers for achieving additional points
- Community needs/benefits not well reflected
 - For example- different communities may value certain developments more based on their unique needs (i.e., a community center for a community which desperately lacked the types of resources and/or services provided)
- Weighted system/potential bias
 - Energy and Transportation categories have yielded higher uptake, likely/to some degree because of higher point totals associated with the strategies in these categories – for example, even though a developer may value Health, the credit may not be worth pursuing when considering costs vs. points achieved

Update Opportunities

The following areas are used in this section to categorize improvement opportunities:

- Reassess Policy objective(s) and strategy-point valuations
- New/ revised categories, strategies and/or prerequisites

The recommendations included below are a synthesis of what was heard from stakeholders. These may vary in terms of “fit” within the existing policy framework/format as well as the level of detail provided but were nonetheless included for further consideration/exploration.

Reassess Policy Objective(s) and Strategy-Point Valuations

To achieve the SDP objective of enhancing environmental sustainability, the Policy should align with and supplement existing City strategies and plans such as We Will Chicago and the 2022 Chicago Climate Action Plan. The update should also align with both stakeholder priorities (i.e., Public health, workforce, livability, community needs/benefits), and those which have started to gain traction both at the local and national level (i.e., building decarbonization, electrification, embodied carbon). One obvious mechanism is through adjusting strategy-point valuations, reallocating heavier point totals to areas of interest or priority. DPD will work with the Advisory Committee to further research and eventually draft the updated policy and implementation details. The input and observations collected during this process will help inform the final product.

New/Revised Categories, Strategies and/or Prerequisites

- Add new category for *Climate Resilience/Adaptation*
 - Potential strategies could pertain to emergency preparedness (i.e., community cooling amenities or heating/warming centers, back-up power generation, etc.), or advanced technologies (i.e., energy storage, or microgrids)
- Add new category for *Education & Awareness*
 - Potential strategies could pertain to targeted education initiatives for residents, building-users, and community, or leadership/peer-learning
- Expand *Health* category to *Health/Livability*
 - Add strategies that pertain to carbon limits/building materials procurement, and air pollution/low-emitting diesel jobsites
- Under *Energy* category-
 - For *Exceed Energy Code* strategy update performance baseline to match most up to date code and potentially raise performance criteria for achieving additional points
 - Revise *Onsite Renewable Energy* strategy language to allow for increased flexibility, while increasing minimum capacity requirements (i.e., in alignment with state renewable portfolio standards, or other related targets)
 - Add electrification strategy, and potentially community solar
- Revise *Workforce Development* strategy/options language to make clearer and criteria more stringent (i.e., direct connection to long-term employment/retainment, development/training, and living wages)
- Revise *Transportation* category strategies based on input from a Nelson/Nygaard report developed by the Chicago Department of Transportation
- For largest planned developments/projects (to be defined by DPD) add prerequisites around community engagement, carbon limits/building materials procurement, and bird friendly design/protection