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Sen. Feigenholtz and Ald. Knudsen Announce Coordinated Legislation Restoring Community Review for Large Utility Projects

Bills take aim at ComEd's proposed Lincoln Park substation, closing a loophole that allows large utility projects to bypass community review

CHICAGO – State Senator Sara Feigenholtz (IL-6) and Alderman Timmy Knudsen (43rd Ward) today announced coordinated [state](#) and [city](#) legislation designed to provide communities a substantive voice in major infrastructure proposals where equipment footprints exceed 0.5 acres.

The effort follows months of concern over the proposed ~1 acre ComEd electrical substation at 1111 W. Diversey, where residents, neighborhood organizations, and elected officials have raised questions about the project's scale in a dense urban area, including its proximity to homes and schools.

Under the current process, large utility facilities can move forward with little local review. Existing classifications treat a small neighborhood-serving installation and a football field-sized regional facility as the same type of "Minor Use." The proposed legislation would establish additional review for projects with greater community impacts.

Over the past several months, Sen. Feigenholtz and Ald. Knudsen — alongside Rep. Ann Williams, Ald. Bennett Lawson, Ald. Scott Waguespack, and the Diversey Community Coalition — have pursued multiple avenues to better understand and slow ComEd's proposal. These include submitting a [Formal Written Interpretation](#) request to the City's Zoning Administrator, seeking project information from ComEd on design and impact, and requesting holds on all demolition and construction permits.

The legislation establishes a clearer framework for when electrical substations should be treated as "Major Utilities" — requiring heightened community review — rather than "Minor Utilities." Specifically, it would classify substations as Major Utilities when they exceed one-half acre in size or include outdoor equipment yards.

"Communities should not wake up one day and learn that a football field-sized utility project can move forward next to homes and schools with little meaningful review," said Sen. Sara Feigenholtz. "And on top of that, ComEd has not been forthcoming with information related to the proposal such as design and impact."

Ald. Knudsen noted that "1111 W. Diversey is a rare large lot in the middle of a dense, high-demand residential area — adjacent to a school and next to an ADA-accessible CTA station. Housing should be built at a site like this, and that's not just my opinion, but the goal of city policy like the Connected Communities Ordinance, which prioritizes housing and mixed-use development near transit."

Throughout the process, community stakeholders have also identified nearby alternative locations for the substation, demonstrating that opposition is not to infrastructure itself, but to questions of scale, siting, and process — including whether a series of more appropriately scaled facilities could meet infrastructure needs without concentrating such a large footprint in one location.

"Our goal is not to say no to infrastructure. If we are asking communities to make major land use tradeoffs, those conversations should happen openly and with the public at the table," said Sen. Feigenholtz.

Knudsen added: *"There can be a system that supports grid infrastructure — but not blindly, and not in locations that are ill-suited for this kind of use."*

The legislation is intended to establish a broader framework throughout Illinois and Chicago, ensuring future infrastructure projects are evaluated not only on necessity, but on scale, location, and neighborhood impact.

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