

Manufacturing advocate optimistic about new mayor

By: [Colleen Lobner](#) May 26, 2011



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Ted Wysocki

(Crain's) — A defender of the city's industrial base in a post-industrial economy, Ted Wysocki likes what he hears so far from Mayor Rahm Emanuel.

Mr. Wysocki, president and CEO of the Local Economic and Employment Development (LEED) Council Inc., a non-profit that promotes business expansion and job creation in the North Side's gritty industrial corridors, agrees with Mr. Emanuel's decision to examine the city's policy on tax-increment financing (TIF).

While the Daley administration touted TIF subsidies as an effective economic development tool, critics called them welfare for politically connected businesses and real estate developers.

"There ought to be local hiring requirements — not just the construction jobs, but for the employers who are benefitting from the TIF work," Mr. Wysocki says.

Mr. Wysocki, a 37-year veteran in the economic development business, will be watching closely — and piping in — as Mr. Emanuel tries to fix the city's budget crisis and forge policies that promote a diverse, sustainable local economy and boost city tax revenue.

For the LEED Council, the stakes are clear: Will the new mayor make it easier for the group to attract and retain businesses to North Side industrial districts, bucking the longer-term decline of the U.S. manufacturing sector?

"We don't change mayors with great frequency. With what Ted does, getting a new administration is always an anxious moment," says Edwin Eisendrath, a former 43rd Ward alderman and now a managing director at Chicago-based Huron Consulting Group Inc.

Though he likes Mr. Emanuel's interest in reforming the city's TIF policies, Mr. Wysocki says he'd also like to see more attention given to the city's Small Business Improvement Fund, a little-noticed program that uses TIF money to provide matching grants of up to \$150,000 for qualifying commercial tenants and landlords who want to improve their properties.

Mr. Wysocki took over as LEED's president and CEO in 2002, after nearly 18 years leading the Chicago Assn. of Neighborhood Development Organizations, a syndicate of community development groups. With a bachelor's degree from Providence College and a master's from the University of Chicago, both in political science, he began his career working for National Training & Information Center, a non-profit resource group that promotes community reinvestment through research and training.

The LEED Council may be best known for protecting North Side industrial neighborhoods from residential and retail developers. For instance, LEED opposed a go-kart racing and sports bar concept proposed for the former U.S. Sample Co. building at 1840 N Marcey St., believing the property could be put to better use. The building was eventually leased to C. H. Robinson Worldwide Inc., a Minnesota logistics firm.

"We took a lot of flack from City Hall at the time — they said we were never going to find anyone to move into this building," Mr. Wysocki recalls. "Long story short, there are 700 people working there today, instead of 50 people pouring beers and pumping gas."

The LEED Council may face an even bigger challenge helping to fill the hole left behind when one of the North Side's best known manufacturers, steelmaker A. Finkl & Sons Co., leaves its factory on the edge of Lincoln Park for a South Side plant.

Mr. Wysocki declines to identify parties that have expressed interest recently in the Finkl property, but he says a major national industrial developer approached the LEED Council about the site before the crash.

"Overall, economic development is more challenging today," he says, "because private credit markets remain tight and public investments will be limited in the immediate future."

Read more: <http://www.chicagorealestatedaily.com/article/20110526/CRED01/110529893/manufacturing-advocate-optimistic-about-new-mayor#ixzz1UdjYctYt>

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