

## Chicago's Green Future - Addressing Environmental Justice and Climate Change Today

We need a Chicago Green New Deal to set a national example as Chicago moves from a city of industrial manufacturing to a logistics hub, and as we trade smokestacks and tailpipes for solar panels and electric buses. As patterns of housing segregation deepen, so does the need for proactive work to deliver environmental justice. A great city responds to its changing environmental challenges, and more, it creates opportunities along the way.

We need to usher in an era, guided by environmental justice, where:

- We achieve one hundred percent clean & renewable energy across all sectors.
- Spur equitable and green development.
- Build Chicago's renewable energy infrastructure and demonstrate that cities can lead in fighting climate change.
- Grow an equitable, community-led and green economy; and,
- Create neighborhoods where ALL Chicagoans can work, play, and breathe easy.

In Chicago, Black and Latine residents are more likely to live close to industrial pollution and have chronic health conditions, such as asthma. ***As Mayor, my priority will be to reinvest in the people and communities decimated by environmental racism and racist policies in every sector of society. We will proactively take action by protecting and investing in clean lands and water, clean industry, and clean development is a critical element.***

Historic redlining, current zoning laws, and continued disinvestment have made south and west side neighborhoods -from Altgeld Gardens to Little Village- into dumping grounds for industry, creating public health hazards.

Chicago needs a Green New Deal to address climate change, bring in good-paying jobs and right the wrongs being done to people who live in environmentally burdened communities.

## **The Vision and Plan**

### **As Mayor, I will bring back The Department of Environment.**

It has now been a decade since the Department of Environment was shut under the Rahm Emanuel administration. I voted to establish the Department as an Alderman, and I will restore it as Mayor.

The new Department of Environment will centralize and consolidate these efforts. Without coordinated oversight driving inter-agency collaboration, Chicago cannot prioritize and effectuate equitable, comprehensive solutions to address environmental injustices and climate change.

It will focus Chicago's attention on viable, permanent, proactive, and responsive solutions to environmental challenges and create environmentally just communities.

### **The Department will:**

- Substantially Increase environmental inspections, return enforcement to 2011 levels, and overhaul permitting processes to protect Chicago's communities.
- Provide strategic and technical assistance to City departments and sibling agencies to comprehensively operationalize environmental metrics across planning and development efforts.
- Lead multi-pronged citywide initiatives to make certain we can achieve our climate change mitigation goals and ensure that environmental justice and environmentally viable investments are

integrated into the City's leadership and decision-making on new projects, comprehensive planning and zoning.

- Serve as the City's central agency that ensures protection, improvement, and comprehensive planning and management for Lake Michigan, Lake Calumet, the Chicago and Calumet Rivers, and surrounding waterways.

**As Mayor, the Department of the Environment will play a major role together with other city departments in implementing:**

**Planning and Zoning Reform.** This will include Cumulative Impacts Assessments to evaluate the impact of multiple pollutants and multiple sources of pollutants on the neighborhoods surrounding these projects. This will eliminate Sacrifice Zones from being created in the future. Industrial corridors are regularly rezoned to benefit new economic development which is often in conflict with surrounding communities and includes no resident input. These developments promise to provide large tax revenues, while they conversely receive massive tax benefits from the city.

**Bad Actor Permit-Holder Monitoring and Enforcement:** Industrial polluters have received permits after repeated violations and [it wasn't until the community brought in in the federal EPA that a cumulative impacts assessment was begrudgingly agreed to](#). Under my administration, we will use proven technology to modernize enforcement of polluters and disallow companies who do not meet the standards from continuing operations that do not foster livable communities. We will work with CBOs who have already invested in air quality monitors.

- **We will investigate the creation of a Climate Fund**, a dedicated revenue stream that will take the fines and fees from polluters to develop green initiatives.
- **We will champion the Environmental Justice Permitting Act** (HB4093/SB2906) which prompts Illinois to give community members standing to challenge permitting decisions made by the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency (IEPA). It also provides

opportunities for communities to weigh in on large permits. This act, with guidance from environmental justice advocates and City officials, would empower and encourage consistent resident engagement that is meaningful and accountable.

- **Waste, Water and Energy Metrics** will be created to inform the location and scale of public and private development in Chicago communities. Efforts like decarbonization and pollutant reduction in our air and waterways demand goals and metrics and transparency of success in meeting them, and that's why after years of the Lightfoot Administration trying to come up with solutions, we still don't have clear pathways to retrofit existing buildings and address vehicular pollution to achieve stated emissions reduction goals.
- **Community-driven decision-making** that is proactive and shared between the city and residents. Community advocates will have the resources to exercise their agency on projects affecting their neighborhoods, rather than as an afterthought.
- **Developing Chicago's version of New York City's Local Law 97** which sets limits for emissions by building type - one that avoids punitive fines while incentivizing compliance.
- **Developing a City-wide composting program** by end of 2024
- **Creating more open, green space** especially so that Chicago will not lag behind other world class cities. A tree canopy goal needs to be equitable and South and West sides need to see tree plantings. Vacant lots can house temporary or permanent native prairies and/or pocket parks as carbon sinks until developed.

**Green Infrastructure and Energy.** The *Inflation Reduction Act and the Infrastructure Bill* which I proudly advocated is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to build a new economy that will provide excellent wages for long-term careers. It will take hard work and creativity to take advantage of this opportunity, and I am committed to making that happen. This new economy will not only utilize the influx of significant federal dollars but also will leverage substantial funding that is available through Illinois' *Climate and Equitable Jobs Act (CEJA)*.

- I want to make use of newer and proven technologies such as Smart Sewers and natural rainwater collection to prevent overflow of sewers and flooding of our homes, businesses, and waterways.
- I want to support renewable energy and energy-efficient installations on existing and new housing, and industrial and commercial developments, among other investments.
- My administration will continue to support and encourage expanded environmental investments through new legislation, our purchasing power, and our permitting of various projects across the city.

**Green Jobs.** The new economic investments from the federal and state government and required utility funding constitute a generational opportunity to develop a workforce that is prepared to take advantage of and thrive in the green economy. Chicago under my Administration will create a comprehensive and inclusive Green Jobs Program that serves Chicagoans of all ages, abilities, skills, education, races, ethnicities, places of origin, gender, veteran-status, and justice involvement, and in all places.

*Jobs will be created:*

- In manufacturing and installation of renewable energy equipment.
- In green infrastructure installations around roads, sewer and water, housing, and commercial development.
- To establish and maintain green spaces - both parks and vacant lots, and by remediating post-industrial vacant lands for better use.

***We will invest in long-term opportunities to build generational wealth in our communities.***

- **Establish the Chicago Green Municipal Bank (CGMB).** This will use funds from the federal government, pension fund portfolios, the Illinois Climate Bank, philanthropy, and other institutions to create innovative financing products and bring the green economy to Chicago's historically underserved neighborhoods.

- It will provide Black, Brown, and other minority contractors with financing to acquire, rehab, and build housing in Chicago's south and west sides.
  - The CGMB will partner with the Illinois Climate Bank to cheaply finance solar, wind, and heat pump installations across Chicago's residential and business corridors, focusing on formerly redlined communities.
  - The CGMB will work with the Cook County Land Bank and use Chicago's vacant lot program and provide Black, Brown, and other minority contractors with financing to acquire, rehab, and build housing in Chicago's south and west sides.
- **Entrepreneurship and Small Businesses Initiatives-** As Mayor, I will develop a consistent program that equitably provides funding and technical assistance to ensure healthy, sustainable businesses that build community wealth. These programs will continue long after the large, one-time investments such as the Lightfoot Administration's ARPA funding.
    - Support Food Equity Council and Community Centered and Led Decision-Making - My administration will support community research and focus groups such as the Food Equity Council to actualize their intersectional vision for replacing intentionally created food deserts with thriving local economies that also address food insecurity.

**Utilities, City Services, and Investments.** As Mayor, I will integrate climate resilience and mitigation goals into City department operations while maintaining excellent delivery of city services.

- We will create a new office within the Department of Transportation to coordinate and scope contracting for alternate composite materials besides traditional concrete and asphalt, and promote permeable pavers, bioswales, and native seed mixes instead of hydroseed for restoration.

- We will address Department of Streets and Sanitation (DSS) labor and equipment shortages that prevent them from performing common-sense operations like extending street sweeping services to prevent sewer blockage from late-falling leaves.
- Investments in stormwater retention and management will be accelerated to protect homes and businesses from flooding and protect our waterways from sewer overflows. Strategic investment in critical water infrastructure will prioritize equitable access to clean water and sanitation, saving money by avoiding increased public health challenges and flood remediation.
- The Office of City Treasurer should gradually disinvest the city's holding in polluters and invest in proven green alternatives.

**Achieve Water Equity and Prevent Water Privatization.** Water assistance does not achieve water equity, which includes affordability. The City of Chicago must reconsider how it sets water rates so that residents are able to enjoy affordable and clean water. For example, the city should consider an equitable water rate structure that shifts the burden onto industry and commercial uses and away from individual households.

- Permanently do away with water shut offs for all because of non-payment.
- Permanently do away with the city's ability to record a lien against a property and commence foreclosure proceedings for unpaid charges related to water and sewer services.

The City of Chicago has a significant advantage with our access to water. I promise not to privatize or sell off this important natural resource.

**Get Lead out of Water and Sustainable Water Treatment.** As Mayor, I will prioritize the replacement of lead service lines, focusing on Black and Brown communities on the south and west sides where residents live with older systems that are especially dangerous for young children's brain development. As it relates to the [city-assisted lead service line replacement](#)

[program](#): there should be automatic eligibility for those who are receiving energy-assistance (LIHEAP, LIHWAP, URB).

**Maintain Affordability of Energy Sources.** [The Lightfoot Administration rushed a backdoor deal to extend a franchise agreement with ComEd](#) even while electricity shut offs to vulnerable communities are a regularity. ComEd's and Peoples Gas' willingness to decarbonize is haltingly slow and we will not reach our climate change mitigation goals as a city if we continue business as usual. We need a leader who can understand that inaction now will be grievously injurious down the road, and I am committed to working to find solutions. I will create a broad public evaluation of the Franchise agreement and alternatives to ComEd to ensure that the Franchisee will provide fair and equitable pricing, distribution and service. I will actively explore alternatives to ComEd, especially Municipalization in order to promote fairness and competition.

**Considering a pathway to municipalization of energy delivery** is critical to maintaining competition and public oversight of energy delivery so we can ensure affordability.

**Bolster Climate Mitigation and Resiliency:** As Mayor, I will organize all elements of its environmental platform under the umbrella of climate mitigation and resiliency to ensure all investments are sustainable for the long-term quality of life and economic health of all our communities. The investment of our public dollars must start to reflect our climate goals. Under my administration, a Net Zero Investment Framework portfolio analysis will take Chicago forward towards managing our low-carbon investments and realizing sizable returns from this framework.

**Pass the Chicago Bird-Friendly Building Ordinance.**

**Earmark revenue generated from the Checkout Bag Tax for Environmental Purposes, specifically lead pipe removal.** There is a \$.07 per bag tax on the retail sale or use of paper and plastic checkout bags in Chicago, of which retail merchants retain \$.02 and the remaining

\$.05 is remitted to the city. The revenue generated should be earmarked for environmental purposes.

I have walked the talk on environmental justice.

Hilco:

- Led and co-authored a letter to the Chicago City Council, Illinois Environmental Protection Agency (ILEPA), and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) asking them to address the cumulative impact of pollution in communities on the Southwest Side of Chicago.
- Led other elected officials in filing a formal complaint with the USEPA which led to the involvement of Illinois Attorney General Kwame Raoul.

I was:

- An early cosponsor of the Green New Deal Resolution and all 10 major Green New Deal bills in Congress. (Reference: [gndchampions.com](http://gndchampions.com))
- Voted against the USMCA based on its failure to put in place enforceable environmental and labor protections.
- Co-led the Bus Rapid Transit Act to bring billions of dollars of investments to cities for excellent bus routes with electric buses.
- Launched and co-founded the **Future of Transportation Caucus** with the primary objective to create and advocate for a vision of transportation policies that prioritize equity, access, and sustainability.
- Successfully introduced and passed into law (via the FY2020 appropriations process) an amendment to strike the 2006-2020 ban on the Army Corps of Engineers' authority to implement 2013 Principles & Guidelines, developed by the Obama Administration. Those guidelines implemented the Army Corp of Engineers' expanded cost-benefit analysis authority when prioritizing projects in their annual project docket, to include flood risk mitigation, community recreation, and value, as well as ecological restoration.

- Introduced legislation to improve access to jobs and services while promoting transit, bike, and pedestrian transportation alternatives to auto-travel.
- Introducing legislation to create incentives for equitable transit-oriented development to ensure access and proximity of affordable housing to public transportation corridors.
- Fought for additional funding to remove lead pipes in Chicago and the State of Illinois.