



2019 ENVIRONMENTAL PLATFORM *for the* CITY OF CHICAGO

— Sierra Club Chicago Group —

The Sierra Club Chicago Group is proud to share our 2019 Chicago Environmental Platform. This document is based on a survey of local Sierra Club members and was developed by volunteers and staff. It reflects the environmental priorities and recommendations of a wide range of Chicagoans concerned about issues of vital importance to the entire city.

CLEAN ENERGY

It's Time for a Just and Equitable Transition to 100% Clean Energy

To date, more than 100 cities and two states have set goals to source 100% of their overall electricity supply from clean, renewable energy. In 2017, the City of Chicago committed to powering all municipal operations with 100% clean energy by 2025.

Sierra Club and the Chicago Ready for 100 Collective believe that Chicago can improve its health and economy, and can advance social, racial, and economic justice, by transitioning our entire community to 100% clean, renewable energy. Once a commitment is made, the city must work with stakeholders to create a community-led plan to achieve the 100% goal in ways that address income and racial inequality, center environmental justice, and redress the disproportionate harms that low-income communities and people of color have suffered from fossil fuels.

The city must also ensure that key stakeholders representing the full racial, cultural, economic, and ecological diversity of Chicago participate in the development and implementation of our clean

energy transition plan. By including all perspectives, we can ensure that Chicago will reach this goal in ways that maximize the economic and health benefits for Chicagoans who need them most.

Strengthen Building Energy Efficiency Targets

Chicago's buildings account for more than 70% of the city's carbon emissions. By strengthening and building upon the existing Energy Benchmarking Ordinance, we can reduce pollution, create jobs, and save money for the city's residents and businesses.

Energy efficiency promotes healthier, more resilient buildings, improving health, safety, and productivity. Energy efficiency programs should be accessible to everyone in Chicago, from owners of large buildings to people with low incomes who are disproportionately burdened by energy costs.

Chicago should begin to explore policies and programs that assist and encourage "beneficial electrification" to heat and power buildings in cases where electrification saves consumers money over the long run, enables better grid management, and reduces negative environmental impacts.

Update Buildings Codes for the Clean Energy Economy

As we undergo a major shift to a clean energy economy, our city's building codes should reflect that ongoing change in the way we generate and use energy. Chicago

The 2019 Chicago Environmental Platform outlines the local leadership needed on Chicago's environmental issues, including:

- Clean Energy
- Clean Water
- Environmental Justice
- Open Space and Wildlife
- Recycling and Waste Reduction
- Restoring the Chicago Dept. of Environment
- Transportation

The Sierra Club Chicago Group encourages candidates for city office, elected officials, and other municipal policymakers to read this platform and consider its recommendations in forming policy positions.

should strive to adopt building codes and amendments more stringent than the required Illinois Energy Conservation Code.

New buildings in Chicago should accommodate solar panels and electric vehicle charging, and we should have a clear path towards making new buildings net-zero-energy in the near future. This will cement our status as a leader in city-level climate action, while preventing costly renovations in the future in order to accommodate modern energy technologies. These qualities will make our city more attractive to innovative businesses that increasingly demand sustainability throughout all aspects of their operations.

CLEAN WATER

Eliminate Lead Contamination of Drinking Water

The tragic reality that many Chicagoans still drink water contaminated with lead is a reminder that we need to invest in our infrastructure and protect vulnerable communities. Chicago must take action to replace every lead service line and every fixture containing lead that comes in contact with water used for drinking, cooking, or bathing in homes, schools, parks, and other facilities. The city must also develop a timeline and financing plan for achieving this goal.

Make Clean Water Affordable for Every Chicagoan

Water rates are unaffordable for many households in Chicago, but every family deserves to access clean water without sacrificing other necessities. The city's water department should develop a plan that will make clean water affordable for all by providing financial relief through adjusted water rates for low-income households and by ensuring equitable and just implementa-

tion of capital improvements. Such a plan should be developed collaboratively with stakeholders including public health agencies and organizations, labor unions, nonprofit organizations, schools, and community groups. Chicago should maintain public ownership of its water system.

Reduce Combined Sewer Overflows (CSOs) and Other Pollution

Increasing rainfall and impervious surfaces are overwhelming Chicago's combined sewer system, causing frequent CSOs that release untreated sewage, trash, and polluted runoff into the river and sometimes Lake Michigan. Investments in clean water infrastructure are needed to prevent CSOs and flooding. Green infrastructure should be prioritized where feasible in order to reduce polluted runoff, build resilience, and mitigate the impacts of climate change. The City of Chicago and the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District (MWRD) should improve coordination and transparency in notifying the public of when and where CSOs have occurred, are occurring, or will occur.

Stop the Spread of Aquatic Invasive Species

The Asian carp threatening to enter Lake Michigan is just one of many invasive species that must be kept out of the Great Lakes; others are at risk of invading the Mississippi River basin. We support ongoing efforts to stop the spread of invasive species, making incremental improvements such as the proposed Brandon Road Lock & Dam project, and ultimately implementing a permanent solution to invasives moving both into and out of the Great Lakes.

Chicago leaders should participate in regional and national efforts to explore short- and long-term solutions to protect

Lake Michigan and the Chicago Area Waterway System. The city should seek opportunities to address flooding and water quality concerns as part of invasive species control.

Protect Communities in Flooding-Prone and Heavily Polluted Areas

Flooding and pollution are problems for much of Chicago, but some communities are less equipped to mitigate the impacts and deal with the damage. Investments in green and gray infrastructure are needed to prevent flooding, and low-income communities should be prioritized.

Chicago should also adopt Building Code amendments and building inspection protocols that incorporate flood mitigation measures and establish a stormwater management portfolio standard, including dedicated funding for environmental justice communities experiencing disproportionate impacts from flooding. Ongoing odor and water pollution in places like Bubbly Creek must also be addressed so that our waterways can serve as assets to all of our communities.

Reduce Plastic Pollution in Waterways and Waterfront Areas

Litter often winds up in Lake Michigan, the rivers, and other areas where it harms people and wildlife. Chicago should take steps to reduce single-use plastics at their source, both to minimize waste and to reduce the risks of plastic pollution.

Among these steps, the city should minimize or restrict the production, distribution, and usage of single-use plastics and styrofoam products; incentivize compostable and reusable products; improve signage and availability of trash and recycling receptacles, especially during holidays and major events; and

improve public education about plastic pollution and other litter.

Eliminate Toxic Pollution

We must also protect our waterways from other sources of toxic runoff and contamination. Pavement sealants that contain known carcinogens, like coal tar, are still used on driveways and parking lots. These must be banned, as has been done in other communities and as per the recommendation of the American Medical Association. We must also address other contaminants, pharmaceuticals, and endocrine-disrupting chemicals that are present at concerning levels in our waterways, according to recent research.

ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

Promote Social, Racial, and Economic Justice

Chicago neighborhoods and residents marginalized by economic and racial inequality tend to be those most impacted by pollution and most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change. At the same time, these residents face extra barriers to fully participating in our democracy to protect their communities and benefit from the solutions to these threats. Sierra Club supports policies and programs to ensure that all Chicagoans earn a living wage, are welcome in our democracy and public participation processes, and are protected from discrimination, hate, and violence.

Acknowledge and Address the Harms of Environmental Injustice

While environmental degradation harms all of us, it has traditionally done outsized damage to the people and communities who face structural and institutional prejudice. These include Black

people, Latino people, LGBTQ+ people, people with disabilities, and people impacted by poverty. The city's environmental and public health policies must fully recognize the disparate impact of these harms and must prioritize their redress. The development of these policies must include listening to members of impacted communities and centering their needs, goals, and concerns.

The Chicago Department of Public Health should evaluate, strengthen, and grow the scope of its environmental enforcement and healthy communities initiatives.

The city and all sister agencies should enact citywide environmental justice policies that protect the health and well-being of impacted communities across Chicago.

Communities that have been plagued by polluted air, water, and soil and by industrial waste should have first priority in new economic investment by the city.

The city should develop concrete steps to address the cumulative environmental and health burdens disproportionately borne by low-income communities of color across Chicago that result from the industrial siting and planning practices of the Chicago Department of Planning. The city should also conduct a racial equity analysis of the Department of Planning's practices and policies.

The city must be vigilant in protecting residential areas from the impacts of industrial, logistics, and waste activities. Neighborhoods have faced threats from petcoke, manganese, diesel emissions, polluted runoff, dust, and other pollutants. The city should work with affected communities and take enforcement, regulatory, and planning steps to remedy and mitigate these harms and prevent their recurrence.

Empower Community Members in All Planning Processes to Curtail Displacement

City officials and decision-makers must be mindful of the ways that development can drive gentrification, displace current residents, and disrupt communities. When considering new construction, public parks, walking and biking trails, zoning decisions, or any other developments or amenities with the potential to raise land values, the city must ensure that current residents of the neighborhood will have a voice in the planning and will enjoy the benefits.

Leverage Infrastructure Upgrades to Create Job Opportunities

Investments in clean water and clean energy infrastructure can create good, family-sustaining jobs. Chicago should be a leader in adopting equitable hiring practices and training workers, while taking concrete steps to ensure that everyone has an opportunity to enjoy equal benefits, good wages, and fair treatment in these sectors. With these infrastructure projects, the city should support new job training programs and new hiring targets for residents of environmental justice and low-income communities.

OPEN SPACE AND WILDLIFE

Expand Acreage of Publicly Owned Parkland and Other Open Space

Consistent with Chicago's long history of establishing and supporting public lands, the city should maintain and increase its acreage of public lands city-wide. Special emphasis should be placed on acquiring land along the banks of the Chicago River, serving recreational pur-

poses for human residents and providing habitat for wildlife.

In particular, the city should acquire the 24-acre site along the North Branch of the Chicago River, between North Avenue and Cortland Street, to create a publicly owned park and wildlife preserve. The city and the Chicago Park District should move quickly to improve the acres of public parkland on the former U.S. Steel site in the South Shore neighborhood to provide more open space along Lake Michigan on the South Side.

Preserve Natural Habitats and Protect Chicago's Wildlife

The city and the Chicago Park District should continue their exciting plans to improve wildlife habitats and improve public access to the shores of the Big Marsh on 130th Street in the Lake Calumet region. The proposed nature center in the Big Marsh Eco-Park will be a center of essential education for neighbors and out-of-town bird-watchers who flock to this part of Chicago to see rare birds. The bike park portion of the Big Marsh Eco-Park is a resource for local cyclists, but the park district should take care to minimize negative impacts on local wildlife and natural habitats when large bike race events are taking place.

The Illinois International Port District should prioritize access to public open space and protection of natural areas in its future plans for the Lake Calumet region. Appointments to the district's board should include local residents and members with this expertise.

Chicago is squarely in one of the nation's largest migration pathways for birds, bats, and butterflies. The city and the Chicago Park District should convert more acres of lakefront parks to natural areas to provide food and rest stops for migratory species.

Chicago should also use more native plants in its park and public-area landscaping. More corner wildflower beds planted throughout the city will provide beauty for human residents and additional micro-habitats for insects and other species.

Minimize High-Impact Recreational Facilities Along the Lakefront

The city and the Chicago Park District should avoid expanding active-use recreational facilities in public parkland east of Lake Shore Drive. Such facilities include soccer and baseball fields, water parks, and golf courses. Chicago's lakefront parks should promote passive-use activities to preserve open space for human and wildlife residents alike.

Keep Public Space Public

The city and the Chicago Park District should not lease public land to private entities for private purposes. Such leases restrict public access and deprive people of their right to use and enjoy common spaces.

Complete the Chicago River Trail

The city's next great waterfront needs to have adequate green space, access to water recreation, and a continuous river trail. All Chicagoans deserve public access to the Chicago River and the riverfront as a public good.

A new biking and walking trail will provide Chicagoans new options for transportation and recreation, all while improving health and economic opportunity. Trail infrastructure upgrades should connect existing trail portions with new ones, as well as installing new bikeways and sidewalks near the river to ensure safe and easy access. Most importantly, trail planning needs to include input from neighborhood community groups, so that plans prioritize local needs and

mitigate impacts related to gentrification.

Require Bird-Safe Building Design

Because of its position on a major migration flyway, Chicago has one of the nation's highest levels of bird and bat injuries and deaths due to collisions with tall, glassy buildings. The city should pass an ordinance requiring bird-safe building design for new and rehabbed buildings.

Foster a Pollinator-Friendly Environment

The city should adhere to good land management practices providing food and shelter for monarch butterflies, which migrate through Chicago in the spring and fall. More flowers that are attractive to monarchs and other pollinators—especially milkweed, the monarch's host plant—should be planted on public lands city-wide. This will help to maintain monarch and bee populations in an era of environmental stress for these species. Further, Chicago should pass a resolution naming the monarch as the city butterfly, following its status as Illinois' state insect.

RECYCLING AND WASTE REDUCTION

Less than 9% of Chicago's household waste is recycled. Improving our recycling rate—one of the lowest among major metropolitan areas in the U.S.—should be a high priority. This will require a complete overhaul of our existing recycling policies, combining innovative new approaches with strategies that have proven effective in other large cities.

Steps may include reforming the city's waste management contracts, strengthening incentives for residents and businesses to recycle and

compost, expanding access to public recycling and composting receptacles throughout the city, and raising public awareness of what materials can be recycled and composted. The city should convene a working group of public officials, nonprofit representatives, and academic experts to study and develop potential solutions.

In addition, recycling companies should be regularly audited to ensure they are properly treating recyclables. To build awareness of and public trust in our recycling program, performance reports should be publicly available and easily accessible, and should include details on both public and private hauling. The city should impose and enforce significant penalties on haulers that improperly treat recyclable materials.

RESTORING THE CHICAGO DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENT

The current Office of Sustainability is a small bureau that replaced the Department of Environment, which was disbanded in 2011 after the original funding for the department was exhausted, with key functions relocated to various departments. The Office of Sustainability handles many environmental challenges, including nearly all the issues raised in this platform.

Restoring a Department of Environment would permanently establish core functions and responsibilities on equal footing with other city departments. It would ensure that the diverse but interconnected issues relating to Chicago's environmental health are considered holistically, rather than piecemeal within separate agencies.

As an independent department rather than a division of the Mayor's Office, it would maintain continuity across mayoral administrations. And it would enable the city to add monitoring enforcement and other regulatory functions, which may be especially important as federal environmental protection efforts are curtailed or eliminated.

TRANSPORTATION

Prioritize Sustainable and Accessible Transportation Options

Chicago must invest in modern, sustainable transportation infrastructure that improves access to public transportation, encourages electric vehicle use, and creates safer conditions for cyclists and pedestrians. To improve our public transportation system, we need to increase funding for rail and bus service improvements, improve accessibility compliant with the Americans With Disabilities Act, and integrate CTA and Metra fare systems.

The continued expansion of protected bike lanes should be a priority. Neighborhood development patterns should be bike-, pedestrian-, and transit-oriented. All new transportation projects must include an equity analysis to ensure maximum community engagement and minimum negative impact.

Chicago leaders should be very active participants in state and regional planning and budgeting processes, advocating for land use and transportation choices in northeastern Illinois that encourage investment in Chicago, and discouraging further decentralization of our region. Chicago should prioritize funding for transit, bike, and pedestrian facilities in its state and federal advocacy.

Car Charging Infrastructure for All

Chicago should consider vehicle and parking policies and fee structures that encourage electric vehicle ownership. The city should also explore policies and investments that make charging available to all Chicagoans, including charging for street parking and multifamily parking.

Improve and Electrify Citywide Bus Service

Many Chicagoans depend on CTA buses to get to work, school, and other destinations every day. However, bus ridership in Chicago is declining. In order to improve bus service, the city should implement bus lanes, traffic signal priority, and faster boarding processes.

The CTA should continue to expand its electric bus fleet in order to decrease emissions. Diesel pollution from buses is a significant source of neighborhood air pollution. Chicago should commit to a goal of a 100% electric bus fleet by 2040. ●

If you have any questions about this platform or would like more information, please email SierraClub.Chicago@gmail.com.