

DEPARTMENTAL ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE ACTION PLAN

CITY OF CHICAGO'S GOAL: *Take a whole-government approach to improve and protect the environment, health, and quality of life in environmental justice (EJ) communities through changes to internal policies, processes, practices and/or budgets.*

ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE ACTION PLAN

Department Name: *Department of Streets and Sanitation (DSS), Bureau of Forestry (BOF) and Recycling and Materials Management (RMM)*

Department Scope and Authorities:

DSS, Bureau of Forestry (BOF) enforces municipal code 10-32 and co-administers with Zoning the municipal code 17-11 relating to the Chicago Landscape Ordinance. In both chapters of code, our scope of influence focuses on trees on city park ways: tree planting, tree protection, tree removal, and Landscape ordinance requirements, etc. Forestry also recently was legislated oversight of the native garden registry 10-32-55.

DSS, Recycling and Materials Management (RMM) team oversees the Blue Cart recycling and yard waste collection programs of the City's 625,000 1 – 4 unit residential households. 1/3 of those households are served by DSS Sanitation crews, and 2/3rds of those households are served by LRS. The RMM team provides education and engagement through its chicagorecycles.org microsite, responds to questions and service issues from the households it serves. The RMM team also has duties pertaining to the oversight and enforcement of Chapter 11-5 of the Municipal Code, the Chicago Recycling Ordinance (CRO). In the CRO, requirements pertaining to high-density households (5+ units) and industrial, commercial, and institutional entities are outlined, as well as annual reporting requirements for Chicago's privately licensed haulers.

Environmental Justice Strategy:

Departments are encouraged to consider strategies that will improve existing conditions for EJ communities and/or prevent future impacts. Describe your strategy:

DSS, Bureau of Forestry (BOF)

1. Strategies for the long-term development and health of our urban canopy from the *CHICAGO URBAN FOREST MANAGEMENT PLAN*, published January 2023. Strategies are based on key issues and themes identified through program assessment and data analysis. The strategies should serve to standardize and optimize Chicago's urban forestry program, improve efficiencies, and develop a more equitable, sustainable, and resilient urban forest.
 1. Complete a comprehensive GIS-based inventory of all public street (parkway) trees.
 2. Implement a proactive tree management program that re-establishes an area tree pruning program.
 3. Improve data, technology, and information management.
 4. Pursue the plan to support Chicago's increase in street tree planting as part of the Our Roots Chicago initiative.
 5. Review, revise, and update Chicago's ordinances, plans, policies, and guidelines to ensure they follow industry best management practices, support the long-term care and maintenance of Chicago's street trees, and are implemented.
 6. Engage, encourage, and support active participation by City boards, residents, and neighborhood & partner organizations in tree planting & care.
 7. Support training and development of Bureau of Forestry staff.
2. Review requirements and enforcement of the Chicago Landscape Ordinance:

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- Expand/revise the Landscape ordinance to include more rigorous landscaping/environmental protection requirements for industrial properties, while also re-examining the current requirements for all properties covered by the ordinance to ensure green space is included whenever possible.
 - Increase enforcement of the ordinance requirements for initial acceptance as well as over long-term compliance. Provide recurring site inspections to ensure compliance. Investigate the feasibility of BOF inspecting Ordinance projects and then work with the Zoning/Planning Department to ensure compliance.
 - These measures would help to ensure more green infrastructure is installed in industrial locations but also that all properties covered by the landscape ordinance are maintaining their green infrastructure and all associated benefits to the community which would improve *environmental health outcomes associated with pollution exposure*.
 - This strategy would help to advocate for increased/maintained green infrastructure for EJ communities.
3. Work with the Department of Water Management to find long term solutions to maintaining and installing water management infrastructure without requiring the removal of mature high % canopy trees.
- With full buy-in and support from managing departmental commissioners, BOF, CDOT, Dep of Planning, IL EPA would sit down with DWM engineers to review existing methodology to work around existing trees to maintain and build DWM infrastructure without requiring tree removal. Develop a site evaluation protocol and a series of standardized mitigation techniques to protect existing trees while allowing for DWM infrastructure repair and/or installation following sound engineering practices and standards required for such installations. The evaluation and resulting recommendations would account for all potential flexibility in design while not compromising the integrity of the infrastructure installation.
 - By standardizing the processes and establishing mitigation techniques, engineers would be able to find solutions allowing for the protection and retention of trees, as part of a standardized palette of options for use on all proposed project designs. The community green infrastructure would be protected by city agencies, removing the need for resident advocacy, protecting communities unfamiliar of the potential options to maintain trees, streamline the design and build phases of construction, and prevent interruptions during the build phase as sub-par solutions are applied to preserve trees after the initial design was complete and using solutions not optimized or as effective as if they had been included as part of the initial design.
 - Would improve retention and collective benefits of having mature high % of tree canopy in the community contributing to more environmental benefits from green infrastructure which would improve *environmental health outcomes associated with pollution exposure*.

DSS, Recycling and Materials Management (RMM)

1. Expand residential organic collection & waste diversion programming. Food scrap composting is an increasingly popular activity across the City of Chicago. It helps divert waste from landfills that are as a rule located in rural, economically distressed areas, which means that those landfills can be operated longer before reaching capacity.

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Food scrap composting is unfortunately cost-prohibitive for many of Chicago's EJ communities, with weekly service by the private sector on par with the cost of the City's monthly garbage fee. The DSS RMM team thus is working on providing this service as an expansion of its waste diversion programming that would require no additional fees to its 625,000 City households.

Following the guidance provided by the 2021 Chicago Waste Strategy, DSS RMM plans on introducing these programs and resources as quickly as City budget and procurement policies will permit:

- The roll out of food scrap collection pilot programs
- Locating food scrap drop off sites around the city
- Distributing free or discounted backyard compost bins directly to residents and community gardens (TBD, PER MO APPROVAL)

2. **Develop a Plan to Implement Commercial Waste Franchise Zoning.** With a franchise zone system, municipalities establish assigned areas and then create (semi-) exclusive long-term contracts with a hauler(s) within each zone. The haulers are typically selected through a bidding process, where haulers provide the municipalities with collection services details and options. Municipalities typically require haulers to abide by stringent regulations that promote a reduced environmental footprint and transparent business practices.

Environmental Justice communities would benefit from this waste collection model in numerous ways: street traffic and air pollution will be reduced; waste collection and recycling services will improve, more and better regulated/safe jobs will be created, and there will be more transparency in collection pricing and competition.

3. **Pass Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) Packaging and Paper Products legislation for Illinois.** Since 2022 DSS has been collaborating on an EPR bill for Illinois with Solid Waste Agency staff from Northern Cook County, Lake County, Du Page County. The legislation would require manufacturers of packaging and paper products to either reimburse or to provide curbside recycling programs for every community and qualifying agency in the state with more than 1,500 residents. There are several environmental justice principles that are connected to this effort. One is the polluter pays principle. IL landfills are nearly maxed out in the Chicago Region, in no small part due to their capacity going towards single use packaging and paper products. This means that Chicago must send its waste streams further and further away from the city, which increases the financial burden on Chicago residents due to increasing hauler expenses. Additionally, the added waste from these waste streams brings truck emissions and road congestion into largely rural, low-income and distressed communities. With this EPR legislation, Chicago and its sister agencies would see their recycling program fully reimbursed. With the budget savings, DSS would have the resources to introduce curbside compost collection. In a larger sense, the cities and towns that currently cannot afford to provide curbside recycling would have that obstacle removed; there are 12 cities in Cook County alone that are currently not providing this service.

Supporting Department(s):

DSS, Bureau of Forestry (BOF)

1. Dep. Planning and Development
2. Dep. Water Management – also CDOT, Dep Planning, Illinois EPA

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DSS, Recycling and Materials Management (RMM)

1. DSS RMM has been collaborating with the Office of Climate & Environmental Equity for the procurement issues, and the Chicago Department of Public Health on food rescue and food waste prevention programming.
2. This is a longer-term goal, DSS would need to collaborate with CDOT, and likely CDPH and DPD, all of whom have a vested interest in seeing healthier built environments for Environmental Justice communities in the form of less air pollution and less truck traffic.
3. DSS has been working closely with staff in the Mayor's Office, including the lobbying team and the CSO.

Impact Measures:

Insert indicators or information sources (quantitative and/or qualitative) that will evidence success. Consider both:

- ***Performance data:*** *How will you measure whether you successfully executed the strategy?*

DSS BOF: Performance data can be as simple as an increased tree canopy. Measured by tree inventory. Increased number of trees and increased size of trees equals increased tree canopy with associated benefits.

DSS RMM: Metrics pertaining to food scrap and organics composting will be tracked for the community garden composting pilot with NeighborSpace. Metrics will also be requested from participants in food scrap drop off programs, those programs will require signing up through an online form, so residents can be reached electronically and easily.

Metrics pertaining to GHG reductions will be tracked as technology and data allow.

- ***Community-level data:*** *How will this affect the condition of EJ communities?*

DSS BOF: Increased tree canopy can be directly correlated to environmental benefits derived through various tree benefits software developed by the USDA and Forest Service. I-tree suite: I-tree canopy can measure canopy and benefits, I-tree landscape specifically measures canopy and census information to generate priority planting/protection for social justice.

DSS RMM:

1. Community engagement will be enhanced by the restoration of the popular Recycling Block Captain program, which was originally managed by the Department of the Environment.
2. Reduced truck traffic by reducing the number of waste haulers in a given zone of the city.

CDOT and possibly DPD would need to help DSS with a traffic flow planning study, but a NYC study found that truck traffic was likely to decrease by approximately 63% from their baseline.

Recycling and composting can be incentivized in these systems, NYC included a mandate that both of those collection services cost less than waste hauling.

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3. Reduced material going to landfills due to circularity measures that are built into the EPR model; extending the life of existing landfills is critical for Chicago and DSS.

Recycling systems in the state receiving the investment that they need in order to sort and process increasingly complex packaging waste streams, while also more effectively capturing high-value material in the stream such as metals and specific grades of plastic.

Improved financial health of DSS (and CPS and the Park District)

Related Department Investments & Prior Commitments:

Briefly describe current/planned initiatives related to this strategy – for example, through the Chicago Recovery Plan, Climate Action Plan, or We Will Chicago. BOF working with Chicago Recovery Plan dollars and also the Our Roots initiative to engage community to increase awareness and also canopy cover within their communities. The above proposed EJ strategies would be in addition to these current strategies and focus more on interdepartmental cooperation and solution finding as opposed to active community engagement and involvement. However, for both of the above proposed strategies, the community would be part of the informational process explaining steps taken to preserve green infrastructure, and possible expanded information demonstrating the added benefits from maintaining and expanding green infrastructure to improve environmental conditions, quality of life, general health, and otherwise mitigate effects of air pollution.

DSS BOF:

1. *BOF does not necessarily have the resources to inspect all existing landscaped ordinance sites but might be able to begin reviewing sites in priority areas and eventually expanding across the city. It is important to remember that Tree canopy benefits are collective and a tree 5 miles away for a location may in some small way contribute to air quality or storm water mitigation at that location, so it is important to eventually encompass all of Chicago, and even encourage the greater Chicagoland area (CRTI tries to do this) in collectively improving the green infrastructure.*
2. *BOF would need the cooperation of Dep of Planning to follow up on contacting property owners and enforcing any landscape inspection deficiencies on private property. BOF does not have the necessary data on property ownership or projects that fall under the ordinance, nor the personnel to administratively process deficiencies and enforce compliance, however BOF could potentially work in conjunction with Plan Review as was done when the Landscape Ordinance was initially enacted, to complete field inspections so that Planning/Zoning could follow up with developers/property owners for compliance.*

DSS RMM:

1. The City allocated approximately \$5 million through the Chicago Recovery Plan to DSS RMM, and has also received grant support via NRDC's Food Matters program. RMM also submitted the first-ever EPA grant for the department in February, seeking \$2.7m in funding that would allow five EJ communities to receive 30 months of food scrap curbside collection at no charge.

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2. No formal commitments have been made to date outside of staff time for researching best practices and policies.
3. To hire a consultant from PSI, DSS contributed funding along with the solid waste agencies noted earlier. Investment has otherwise been a modest amount of existing staff time.

Action Steps	Timeline	Status
<i>Describe 2 or more specific actions that you will take to advance this strategy. At least one action step should discuss steps you will take to engage people who live in EJ communities to help you plan, implement, and evaluate the success of this strategy.</i>	<i>Note when this step is targeted to be completed</i>	<i>Note any progress to date</i>
DSS BOF: <i>BOF is reviewing current procedures and resources available to determine feasibility to resume compliance inspections.</i>	<i>undetermined</i>	<i>preliminary</i>
DSS BOF: <i>BOF will meet with Planning and Dep Water Management to move forward with these strategies if intergovernmental support facilitates these collaborative efforts.</i>	<i>Undetermined but making initial contact regarding Landscape ordinance enforcement</i>	<i>preliminary</i>
DSS BOF: <i>Continue to encourage and plant trees in priority areas but also through Chicago</i>	<i>current</i>	<i>ongoing</i>
DSS BOF: <i>Continue to work with DWM and planning to fit tree planting into the hardscape infrastructure of Chicago on a case by case as currently doing; advocate for all communities to preserve mature trees and plant new trees.</i>	<i>current</i>	<i>Ongoing</i>
DSS RMM: Procure compost bins suitable for drop off and curbside collection.	<u>Phase 1:</u> Q1 – Q4 2023	In progress; initial order of compost bins has been placed
DSS RMM: Collaborate on compost educational programming with/for the community garden communities that are part of the NRDC and NeighborSpace pilot.	<u>Phase 1:</u> Q1 – Q4 2023	Underway. An online webinar workshop was held in March, and an in-person workshop was

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		held at the El Paseo garden on Earth Day.
<p>DSS RMM: Create a roll-out plan including education and outreach related to new drop off and curbside collection programs, as well as the improvement of ongoing yard waste pickups.</p>	<p><u>Phase 2:</u> Q1, 2023 – Q3, 2024</p>	<p>A plan was created for RMM’s EPA grant proposal, elements of it will be used for the other compost programs.</p>
<p>DSS RMM: Engage CDOT on viability and timetable for a traffic study. Engage CDPH, DPD, other interested City collaborators on the merits and challenges of the system. Finding elected representatives who are interested will also be critical; the new chair of the Solid Waste and Sanitation Committee in City Council might be a helpful ally.</p>	<p><u>Phase 1:</u> Q 1 – 4, 2023</p>	<p>A traffic study is required before implementation can begin. Engagement and education efforts for other departments and elected representatives can occur simultaneously.</p>
<p>DSS RMM: Form working group from regional solid waste agencies, hire consultant from PSI in order to produce initial draft of EPR legislation, engage stakeholder groups (trade associations, environmental advocates, etc.) for feedback.</p>	<p><u>Phase 1:</u> Q2, 2022 – Q4, 2023</p>	<p>This is a multi-year effort.</p>
<p>DSS RMM: Find sponsors and introduce legislation in Springfield.</p>	<p><u>Phase 2:</u> Q1 – Q2, 2023</p>	<p>The full EPR bill was not achievable in the spring 2023 session. The working group pivoted and</p>

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		<p>split this complex legislation into two parts to help keep up the momentum, and the first part, a Statewide Needs Assessment, did successfully pass and become law. (Maryland recycling advocates set a precedent for this approach).</p>
<p>DSS RMM: EPR legislation goes into effect.</p>	<p><u>Phase 2:</u> Q1, 2024 – Q4, 2026</p>	<p>Timeline is in flux following the latest approach, but the working group has continued meeting, and is building support from stakeholders, including EJ advocates, for the second part of the EPR legislation.</p>

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Community Input & Response

Community Input:

Please see input and responses below.

Response to Community Input:

Requests

- *Provide more funding for park improvements, streetscaping, green alley ways, and other neighborhood improvements. **These types of improvements do not fall under the Bureau of Forestry's purview.***
- *"There needs to be attention paid to the impact of landscaping companies using industrial gas-powered leaf blowers. Many cities are moving toward electric leaf blowers and Chicago needs to do the same." **DSS will look into transitioning BOF to electric blowers if environmental funding is available. They cost approximately \$1,500 each, about 5 times as much as gas blowers (\$200-\$300) and would need electric infrastructure at Forestry yards to charge the batteries. As far as landscaping companies we can also look at the implications of proposing municipal code to require use of electric but due to the high cost may place undue burden on landscape companies, many of which are small independently owned enterprises consisting of a pickup truck and trailer, which might be unable to use and maintain electric equipment.***
- *"There absolutely needs to be conversation and action around how invasive/noxious plants and trees are dealt with, and by whom. Specifically....is Metra responsible for the state of the embankments on either side of their railroad tracks?" **DSS Forestry will investigate this. The Noxious weed law falls under the Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR), and they would enforce it. Private Property owners are required to come into compliance by IDNR or face fines. We will investigate how to best report incidences and request enforcement from IDNR.***
- *Add specific strategies for the long-term development and health of our urban canopy (increase # of trees across the city, and ensure appropriate care). **Added #1 Strategy***
- *Consider the small things that can be done to improve daily life, like more public trash cans. **This quality-of-life request does not fall under the Bureau of Forestry's preview.***
- *Need more community education. Many are misinformed about the benefits of tree planting. **The DSS Departmental PIO is working with city foresters to provide information on the benefits of tree planting. DSS is also working with aldermen, community-based organizations, and other community leaders to increase informational outreach.***
- *Many have robust gardens and don't know lead levels are unsafe for planting. **This does not fall under the Bureau of Forestry's operations. We do not have the ability to measure lead levels in soil nor make recommendations of safe levels for planting gardens.***
- *Need a clear plan of which nonprofits, agencies and organizations will handle the funds to beautify neighborhoods. **The Bureau of Forestry's budget is determined by Office of Budget and Management and approved by City Council for specific Bureau of Forestry tree maintenance operations.***
- *Additional street maintenance funds for heavily trafficked truck routes should be allocated. **This does not fall under the Bureau of Forestry's purview.***

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Concerns

- *Improve hauling standards at public housing. It is often dumped or not cleaned out namely at Altgeld Gardens. **These types of services at Altgeld Gardens fall under the purview of the Chicago Housing Authority.***
- *Among the strategies that were identified as most important:*
 - *Aerial tree planting - **Area tree planting- The Bureau of Forestry plants trees throughout Chicago to maintain the health and vitality of the urban forest. BOF has expanded planting capacity with the Our Roots Chicago canopy expansion initiative and continues to plant resident requests as well as work with community-based organizations to further expand planting. Please help increase the urban tree canopy and encourage Chicago residents to request a new tree.***
 - *Strong and resilient vegetative barriers to air and noise pollution. – **Contained within our proposed zoning code review and enforcement already proposed in our strategic plan.***
 - *Expanded residential organic collection and waste diversion. **Bureau of Recycling and Materials Management is working on this.***
 - *Cleaning the north branch of the river, **not under Bureau of Forestry's purview, adding many trees along Lawrence BOF will address, and expanding park space, not under Bureau of Forestry's purview.***