



CITY OF CHICAGO • OFFICE OF THE MAYOR



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

November 4, 2021

CONTACT:

Mayor's Press Office

312.744.3334

press@cityofchicago.org

**MAYOR LIGHTFOOT ANNOUNCES HISTORIC INVESTMENT IN TREE EQUITY IN
RECENTLY PASSED BUDGET**

*\$46 million out of the \$188 million in environmental justice and climate action budget
will go to planting and maintaining 75,000 trees over 5 years*

CHICAGO - Mayor Lori E. Lightfoot highlighted a historic expansion and reorientation of the city's tree-planting operations, funded by \$46 million in city funding. As part of the Mayor's new tree equity strategy, the city will plant 75,000 trees across the city over the next 5 years. This represents a doubling in tree planting over the previous year. The tree equity strategy will prioritize the planting of trees in historically marginalized and underserved communities, equitably conveying ecosystem benefits to communities disproportionately impacted by the climate crisis. This effort will help meet the City's commitment to the Paris Climate Agreement, environmental justice, and equity.

"Our new tree planting strategy is part of our effort to fight the climate crisis," said Mayor Lightfoot. "Delivering on bold, equitable climate goals is critical for our city to continue to thrive. These investments will directly benefit our residents in neighborhoods disproportionately impacted by the effects of climate change and help address decades of disinvestment."

While the citywide tree canopy coverage in Chicago is 16%, this can vary greatly between neighborhoods, ranging from under 10% to 46%. Tree canopy coverage can have a direct impact on neighborhood air quality, temperature, flooding, and public health. Central to the city's new approach will be planting trees where they are most needed for health and equity outcomes.

"We expect this historic investment to reap historic outcomes. Taking an equity-centered and data-driven approach, we can identify where trees can have the greatest impact and work directly with residents and community groups in those areas to plant and maintain trees," said Angela Tovar, Chief Sustainability Officer for the City of Chicago. "We are committed to building a safer, stronger, and more just Chicago for all."



CITY OF CHICAGO • OFFICE OF THE MAYOR



The Chicago Department of Public Health led the creation of a new ‘community site selection tool’ that brings together data on tree canopy, air quality, land surface temperatures, economic hardship, and other factors, with support from the Bloomberg Philanthropies Partnership for Healthy Cities. The city will use the tool to work with local nonprofits and community groups to identify priority communities and locations to plant trees. This, combined with the increase in funding for tree planting over the next five years, will help increase the number of trees in neighborhoods throughout the city and reduce the impacts of climate change on these communities. Bloomberg Associates, a pro bono municipal consulting service, has provided strategic advice on the development and rollout of the tree equity strategy.

“Mayor Lightfoot’s investment will make a significant positive impact on the health of Chicago’s urban forest,” said Lydia Scott, director of the Chicago Region Trees Initiative. “We look forward to continuing our partnership with the city to provide an increased and more equitably distributed tree canopy for its neighborhoods.”

The tree equity investment is one key component of Mayor Lightfoot’s “all-in” approach to fighting the climate crisis and part of \$188 million in new funding to build resilience in neighborhoods disproportionately impacted by the effects of the climate crisis. The neighborhood-specific climate interventions will build a safer, stronger, and more just City for all and covers a broad range of environmental issues, from land remediation to tree planting. Each climate and environmental initiative was developed through a lens of racial equity, centering historically marginalized and underserved environmental justice communities.

“Cities are on the front lines of climate change, experiencing the direct impacts of extreme weather but also able to deploy the solutions needed to reduce carbon emissions and protect residents,” said Adam Freed, Principal for Sustainability at Bloomberg Associates. “Mayor Lightfoot’s historic investment in climate solutions, core commitment to equity, and use of data to target investments make it a national model for smart, impact-driven climate action.”

Other key investments include:

- \$25.75 million to create 20 new green and resilient schoolyards at public schools in the City’s most flood-prone areas. This initiative builds upon the highly successful green alley program and allocates resources to communities experiencing disproportionate amounts of flooding related to climate change.
- \$41 million to retrofit 500 low-income homes and units, create neighborhood resilience hubs, install solar power on 5 public libraries, and utilize existing roofs on industrial facilities to install community solar. These energy



CITY OF CHICAGO • OFFICE OF THE MAYOR



- projects build climate resilience, lower utility bills for low-income residents, create high-paying jobs, and accelerate our just transition to a renewable energy economy.
- \$75 million in a holistic package of community-level climate projects that target some of the highest priority and most challenging environmental issues. These projects will improve organics diversion, remediate large swathes of contaminated land, decarbonize City fleets and buildings, clean our waterways, fund strategic neighborhood climate resilience projects, and invest in a historic trail network.

###