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CITY OF CHICAGO RELEASES ANTICIPATED WASTE STRATEGY

City of Chicago Waste Strategy prepared by nonprofit Delta Institute analyzes Chicago's waste and materials management to expand and improve reduction, diversion, cost, and equity opportunities

CHICAGO - Today, Mayor Lori E. Lightfoot released the [City of Chicago Waste Strategy](#). This plan would overhaul the City's waste system, which would help minimize landfilling, increase diversion and recycling, reduce cost, and increase efficiency, maximize economic investment and workforce development opportunities, and address social and environmental justice inequities.

"The City of Chicago Waste Strategy presents an exciting opportunity to take new and innovative approaches to tackle the waste issues that impact our communities, environment and economy," said Mayor Lightfoot. "We look forward to swiftly implementing many of the recommendations outlined in this report and developing a modern materials management system that minimizes landfilling, advances our city's ambitious sustainability goals and prioritizes the needs of our residents."

The report details more than 63 strategic recommendations to help address waste management, 12 of which are being prioritized by the City in 2021 and 2022. The City of Chicago partnered with Delta Institute, a well-respected 501c3 nonprofit specializing in municipal solid waste management planning to evaluate, assess, document, and update the many interrelated aspects of waste in Chicago. The University of Illinois at Chicago provided an analysis and current condition assessment that informed the proposed strategies.

"I am proud to lead Mayor Lightfoot's efforts to improve our waste system and to generate new opportunities to strengthen local communities, generate quality jobs, and improve the overall livability of our city," said Angela Tovar, Chief Sustainability Officer. "Our newly imagined materials management strategy will minimize landfilling and waste processing, the source of 6% of our greenhouse gas emissions in the City of Chicago."



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The recommended strategies were developed through robust collaboration with more than 90 different City representatives and stakeholders from numerous municipal departments, nonprofits, universities, community groups, and individuals to:

- Review current waste and recycling data, programs, policies, and infrastructure;
- Analyze best practices and programs in peer cities; and
- Engage with stakeholders in the City, the private sector, and Chicago neighborhoods.

The 2021 City of Chicago Waste Strategy is comprised of multiple reports and assessments that include an Existing Conditions Report, Waste Characterization and Generation Update Report, a Peer City Analysis, and Materials Management Strategies. Management strategies address key priorities, including municipal management and data tracking; source reduction including reuse and repair; residential waste reduction; industrial, commercial, and institutional waste reduction; organics and food waste; specialty materials that cannot be managed through traditional recycling methods; and construction and demolition debris.

“Delta Institute appreciates the City’s desire to address pressing issues—such as the current recycling rate and equity considerations--to improve the way we think about waste,” said Bill Schleizer, CEO of Delta Institute. “Redesigning how the City manages waste and materials while addressing long-standing environmental justice issues requires a long-term commitment on behalf of many City decision-makers, and we applaud taking this sizable first step to that commitment.”

The report includes tangible next steps for the City and short-term priorities for 2021 and 2022, which include reviewing policy and ordinances, increasing opportunities for community education and interventions, and strengthening internal operations.

“The Chicago Department of Streets and Sanitation is always looking for new ways to divert waste. Recently, we implemented a [new contract for the Blue Cart Recycling program](#) to improve residential recycling programs, and currently, we are working on reducing food waste through the NRDC Food Matters cohort,” said DSS Acting Commissioner Cole Stallard. “We are excited to leverage these steps forward and fulfill the priorities in the Waste Strategy.”

“I commend Mayor Lightfoot and the Project Team on the release of the report and their commitment to the health of our environment and our communities,” said 12th Ward Alderman George Cardenas. “We have a real opportunity to advance management strategies that can positively reduce Chicago’s climate change impact.



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These strategies will have both short-term and long-term impacts, and many present cost savings and revenue generation potential for the City.”

Among the information presented in the report is the city’s annual waste generation, where in 2020, the City of Chicago generated 4.13 million tons of material waste.

“This is a time for our city to reframe our waste management system away from disposal and reimagine how this system can support the long-term sustainability of our great city,” said 39th Ward Alderman Samantha Nugent.

"It is encouraging to hear Mayor Lightfoot’s public commitment to accelerating necessary improvements in resource management, and to see recommended strategies in this report — such as those prioritizing ICI waste reductions, wasted food rescue and recovery and public education and engagement — that closely align with ongoing work of organizations like Chicago Sustainability Task Force, Illinois Food Scrap Coalition and Wasted Food Action Alliance,” said Stephanie Katsaros of Bright Beat.

The City of Chicago Waste Strategy is part of Mayor Lightfoot’s mission to actively create opportunities for a green economic and social recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic. Mayor Lightfoot’s priorities include maximizing local benefits to communities beginning first with our historically underserved, creating new workforce development opportunities, reducing our reliance on fossil fuels, and lowering greenhouse gas emissions. Find more information and view the entire report [here](#).

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