



CITY OF CHICAGO • OFFICE OF THE MAYOR



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ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE TAKES MAJOR STRIDES IN MAYOR JOHNSON'S FIRST YEAR

Re-establishing the Department of Environment, allocating millions toward decarbonization and green union jobs exemplify Mayor Brandon Johnson's strategy towards addressing the climate crisis in his first year in office

CHICAGO – Mayor Brandon Johnson advanced a series of strategies throughout his first year to combat climate change, pollution, and waste while centering the needs of Chicago's working families. Through lawsuits, programs, budget allocations, policies, and leveraging federal partnerships, Mayor Johnson has emerged as a national leader in the climate justice movement at the municipal level.

Today's release highlights the mayor's commitment to environmental justice through the Department of the Environment, and is the sixth in a series of recaps leading up to the May 15, 2024, first-year anniversary of the Johnson Administration.

"When we are working on our policies around climate change, our primary concern is the people of Chicago. We saw how devastating the flooding was on the West Side and we see how pollution contributes to higher rates of asthma and cancer in Black and Brown neighborhoods," said **Mayor Brandon Johnson**. "Our mission this first year has been to lay the groundwork for transformational change while protecting the residents of Chicago."

Mayor Johnson's FY24 budget re-established the Department of Environment (DOE) after it had been shuttered under previous administrations. **DOE Commissioner and Chief Sustainability Officer (CSO) Angela Tovar** is tasked with building out the capacity of the Department so that it can be an effective force to protect the residents of Chicago from environmental harm in an equitable way.

"This year the Johnson Administration has made long-overdue progress to mitigate the harmful impacts of climate change and to ensure that residents in the most overburdened areas of the City are centered and engaged in the solutions-building process," Tovar said. "As we enter year two of the administration, we are laser-focused on carrying this momentum forward and accelerating green economic investments across all 77 of our communities."



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Cumulative Impact Assessment

Early in the administration, Mayor Johnson announced the release of the City's Cumulative Impact Assessment ("Assessment") to help the City monitor and address the cumulative impacts of environmental harm. This Assessment, co-led and co-designed with people and organizations who live with these issues every day, reinforces and supports the requirements of the City's voluntary compliance agreement with the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.

Recognizing that environmental protection and public health require a full force of government approach, the Assessment also provides strategies and actionable policy recommendations to guide decision-making on issues such as land use/zoning, permitting, enforcement, transportation planning, and more. The report can be found [here](#).

Composting and Conservation

In October, Mayor Johnson worked with the Department of Streets and Sanitation (DSS) to launch the City's [first-ever citywide composting initiative](#) for Chicago residents. The initiative allows all Chicago residents to bring their household food scraps to one of 17 locations throughout Chicago.

"DSS worked with city partners to bring composting to Chicago residents to help meet the City's climate action plan and to increase its material diversion rate," **said DSS Commissioner Cole Stallard**. "The department is grateful to have additional resources to carry out this initiative and we are fully committed to the program's operations and success."

In another first for the City, Mayor Johnson launched [the Native and Pollinator Garden Registry Advisory Board](#). The Board is tasked with creating a native and pollinator garden registry, developing criteria for applications, and reviewing and providing recommendations to the Commissioner of the Department of Streets and Sanitation (DSS), who will oversee and maintain the registry. The Board reflects the City's ongoing commitment to protect native habitats and increase nature-based solutions to climate change.

Decarbonization and Community Climate Investments

In July, Mayor Johnson announced a [Request for Proposals](#) that allocated \$15 million toward one-to-four-unit residential building decarbonization and retrofit. This program – [Green Homes Chicago](#) – will advance the equitable decarbonization of Chicago's one-to-four-unit residential buildings by providing low- and moderate-income homeowners with home upgrades including new insulation and heat pump heating and cooling systems.

This year, Mayor Johnson introduced the [Clean and Affordable Buildings Ordinance](#) (CABO) which aims to limit indoor fossil fuel emissions while creating significant economic and public health benefits for the residents of Chicago. CABO looks to maximize unprecedented



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investments made available via tax incentives, competitive grants, and formula funding through the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) and the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) to lower building emissions, create jobs in the green economy, and save residents money on utility bills.

An important piece of Mayor Johnson's climate agenda has accelerated the community climate investments in areas that need them the most. As part of that strategy, Mayor Johnson selected 22 small businesses and nonprofits for [Climate Infrastructure Fund grants](#) to help Chicago neighborhoods transition to a green economy and combat the effects of climate change.

Grants up to \$250,000 each will help pay for renewable energy and fossil-free energy efficiency investments; electric vehicles and charging stations; "green" stormwater management upgrades; and other improvements that promote neighborhood resiliency.

Legal Action

In February, Mayor Johnson announced that the City of Chicago is suing six oil and gas corporations and their largest trade association for deceiving Chicago consumers about the climate dangers associated with their products.

The complaint details the history of Defendants' knowledge and deception around their products' role in causing climate change and alleges ten separate causes of action, including: Failure to Warn, Negligence, Public Nuisance, Civil Conspiracy, Unjust Enrichment, and violations of Chicago's municipal codes concerning Consumer Fraud and Misrepresentations in Connection with Sale or Advertisement of Merchandise.

"Evidence shows that these Defendants intentionally misled Chicago residents about the climate change-related dangers associated with their oil and gas products. If unabated, climate change could result in catastrophic impacts on our city," said **Corporation Counsel Mary Richardson-Lowry**. "We bring this lawsuit to ensure that the Defendants who have profited from the deception campaign bear responsibility for their conduct."

Leveraging Federal Partnerships

On Earth Day this year, Mayor Johnson continued to develop that strategy as he pulled together business leaders, non-profit organizations, and members of the faith community to [inform tax-exempt entities of federal clean energy funding](#) to benefit all Chicago residents. Under the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) of 2022, states, local governments, Tribes, territories, and nonprofits seeking to take an active role in the clean energy economy and transition to carbon-neutral energy are eligible to receive a payment equal to the full value of tax credits for building qualifying clean energy projects.

"As we strive towards a more sustainable future, initiatives like Mayor Johnson's Earth Day Celebration are crucial in mobilizing collective action and leveraging federal resources for



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clean energy projects,” said **Philip B. Clement, President & CEO, World Business Chicago.** “By uniting stakeholders across sectors, we can accelerate our transition to a greener, more resilient Chicago. I commend Mayor Johnson for his leadership and commitment to advancing environmental sustainability, and I look forward to supporting these efforts in any way possible.”

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