



CITY OF CHICAGO • OFFICE OF THE MAYOR



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JOHNSON ADMINISTRATION INTRODUCES PILOT PROGRAM TO OFFER CHICAGO RESIDENTS RELIEF WITH LEAK-RELATED WATER BILLS

Water Leak Relief Pilot Program addresses exorbitant fees, alleviates financial burden for Chicagoans

CHICAGO — Mayor Brandon Johnson, Department of Finance (DOF), and the Department of Water Management (DWM) commend the passage through the Finance Committee of the Water Leak-Relief Pilot Program (LRP), a new initiative designed to provide substantial financial relief to residents facing exorbitant water bills due to underground water leaks. This two-year pilot program, which would start on January 1, 2025, supports Mayor Johnson's commitment to providing financial relief to Chicago's working families. The ordinance will go to the full City Council for a vote on May 22, 2024.

"I know what it is like to grow up in a household where the ends do not always meet and one unexpected bill can be devastating," said **Mayor Brandon Johnson**. "This pilot program will provide financial relief to families that are hit with outrageously high bills due to underground leaks and other circumstances beyond their control."

The LRP aims to assist residents who have experienced significant increases in their water bills due to undetected or sudden water leaks. Eligibility for the program requires property ownership and confirmation of a repaired leak by the Department of Water Management. The owner's water meter must be located in an outdoor vault and the leak must be on the water-service line, underground, between the meter and the property. Once eligibility is confirmed, the Department of Finance will issue a credit adjusting the bill amount to reflect the average usage prior to the leak, alleviating unexpected financial burdens.

"The bedrock of public finance is built on fairness and trust and with the creation of the Leak Relief Program, Chicagoans whose water-service line leaks, without their knowledge, will not have to be punished for water they didn't use," **City Comptroller Chasse**

Rehwinkel said. “This program makes Chicago’s water system as a whole fairer for everyday residents.”

The Water Leak Relief Pilot Program is designed to be accessible to a wide range of property owners, including those owning single-family homes, 2-flats, 3-flats, and commercial properties with water service lines one inch in size or smaller. This inclusivity ensures that the program can benefit a broad segment of the city's population.

The program includes a provision for those with outstanding balances to enroll in a payment plan—starting as low as \$25 per month—offering further financial assistance and flexibility. By mitigating the expenses associated with water leaks, the City of Chicago aims to foster economic stability and support community members in maintaining their properties without the added stress of unforeseen costs.

The Water Leak Relief Pilot Program aligns with the 2024 Sustainable Relief framework, which is part of Mayor Johnson's broader policy strategy to increase economic justice and support for homeownership in Black and brown communities. This program is a crucial element of the city's commitment to ensuring water affordability and fostering economic vitality.

“We are committed to ensuring every Chicago resident has access to affordable, reliable water services,” **Department of Water Management Commissioner Randy Conner** said. “This pilot program not only addresses costly leaks but also reflects our dedication to enhancing the City's infrastructure while supporting our community members in need.”

Impact Example

Consider the case of Jane Eyre, who experienced an unexpectedly high-water bill of \$1,500 due to a leak. After the leak was repaired and she applied for the LRP, her bill was adjusted down to \$275, based on her average previous usage. This adjustment saved Jane \$1,225, demonstrating the tangible benefits of the Leak Relief Pilot to the citizens of Chicago.

As the City prepares to launch the Water Leak Relief Pilot Program in January 2025, specific details regarding the application process are still being finalized. Updates on how to apply and program specifics will be made available as they are developed.

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