

Environmental Questions for Candidates

Approved in 2018, the Evanston Climate Action and Resilience Plan (CARP) identifies actions our City must take to meaningfully address climate change. The following questions relate to the various elements of CARP and align with the actions featured in the plan. Citizens' Greener Evanston appreciates your participation. Your responses will be shared with the community in advance of the election.

Evanston Climate Action and Resilience Plan (CARP)

<https://www.cityofevanston.org/home/showdocument?id=45170>

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1. What are the top 3 things you have you done in your personal life to reduce your own, or your family's environmental impact? *

One: We conserve energy. We walk or bike whenever we can, we've added insulation to our attic and weatherstripping to doors and windows, we have a programmable thermostat, we turn off the lights (LED and CFL) when we leave the room.

Two: We have embraced solar energy. We have solar hot water panels on our roof and are soon-to-be community solar electricity customers. (Our roof is too small and shady for PV panels but fine for solar thermal.)

Three: We compost, recycle, and reuse. With so much less waste going to a landfill, we're able to use a smaller garbage can (which also saves money).

2. List 1-4 steps you would take to help implement the CARP plan incorporating key City departments and decision-making processes. *

Step One: Make CARP implementation an official City Council Goal.

It's going to take more than the single City Council vote to approve CARP to achieve our bold goals of Zero Carbon/Zero Waste by 2050. Making CARP implementation an official City goal would force every decision made by the Council and within City administration to be examined through a CARP lens. All City staff should receive adequate education and training on CARP goals and implementation.

Step Two: Provide additional resources to the Office of Sustainability.

Chief Sustainability and Resilience Officer Kumar Jensen has done a commendable job with no permanent staff other than himself. Other cities with similar climate goals have much larger staff support, and the CARP document itself calls for additional personnel. Revenue from the restructured ComEd agreement and ComEd permit fees are sufficient to fund at least one additional full-time position in Evanston's sustainability department.

Step Three: Regular CARP implementation updates to City Council.

The CARP document calls for annual status reports; I would upgrade the frequency to biannual or quarterly. Regularly monitoring metrics and outcomes, especially including an annual greenhouse gas emissions inventory, will keep us on track to our 2050 goal.

Step Four: Continued collaboration with stakeholders and partners.

Zero Carbon/Zero Waste by 2050 is a bold goal which cannot be achieved without the full participation and coordination of all local stakeholders. These include the various City BCCs (not just the Environment Board and Utilities Commission); non-profit organizations like Citizens' Greener Evanston and the Evanston Rebuilding Warehouse; both local school districts; local businesses and business groups; and last and certainly not least, Northwestern University.

3. What are your top environmental or climate priorities for the City? *

With the administrative structure described above in place, the real work of CARP implementation can be accomplished. To list a few of my priorities:

Improve on Community Choice Aggregation

Evanston's Community Choice Aggregation program, which supplies renewably generated electricity to most Evanston households, has been a critical factor in our carbon reduction success to date. Since first aggregating in 2012 we've managed to continue the program through a series of short-term contracts with various Alternate Retail Electric Suppliers. We need a long-term commitment. "Aggregation 2.0" will ideally require direct purchase of electricity from renewable sources and include mechanisms ensuring cost competitiveness.

Evaluate the Feasibility of a City-owned Alternate Retail Electric Supplier

I'd like to explore the possibility of setting up the City of Evanston as an Alternate Retail Electric Supplier and using this municipal ARES to supply not only our residential aggregation customers but also the commercial and industrial customers who cannot participate in aggregation. A preliminary study of this concept done for CGE was favorable and the concept was well received by the Utilities Commission.

Energy Efficiency

We won't be able to meet CARP targets without significantly reducing the energy used to heat and cool buildings in Evanston. The City of Evanston should lead by example with a Net Zero Energy resolution for all new or renovated City buildings. We must tighten building codes with a long-term goal of electrification. We should expand the Energy Efficiency and Water Use Benchmarking ordinance to include requirements or incentives for performance improvement. We should leverage state and federal programs to retrofit low-income homes with energy-saving improvements. We should implement a PACE financing program to help finance energy efficiency projects.

Environmental Justice

Environmental justice isn't a stand-alone topic; EJ considerations permeate every proposal on this list. The Environmental Justice resolution was a good first step in addressing EJ throughout the City; the next step is a fully developed Environmental Justice ordinance which will ensure that all Evanstonians enjoy equal access to environmental assets and that no community within Evanston bears a disproportionate burden of environmental hazards.

Transportation

Everyone in Evanston should live in a "15-minute neighborhood" -- one in which all of one's basic needs can be met within a 15-minute walk from home. This requires making our streets even more safe and accessible to pedestrians and bicycles and making public transportation more accessible. Upgrading our Complete Streets resolution to an ordinance would demonstrate that commitment. The City should prepare for an electric vehicle future and can lead the way by electrifying its vehicle fleet.

Waste

We need to move towards a circular-economy, zero waste future. I support requiring recycling and composting throughout Evanston. I support funding a City staff position dedicated to waste reduction funded by the waste franchise fee. An immediate next step should be updating and strengthening the plastic bag ordinance.

Green Spaces

I'm committed to protecting and conserving open green spaces throughout Evanston, including designated Nature Areas, conserving and expanding our urban forest (including maintaining adequate funding for the City forestry department), and reducing the use of pesticides.

Water Quality

Clean drinking water is a basic human need. I support developing a program to replace all lead service lines in Evanston that centers equity and is based on sound scientific and engineering principles.

Collaborate with Northwestern

In environmental and climate action initiatives as well as in many other areas, the City of Evanston and Northwestern University should collaborate for mutual benefit whenever possible.

4. The City just passed an Environmental Justice Resolution. What steps should be taken to ensure that Environmental Justice (EJ) is incorporated into City Code and that all City staff is trained to identify and tackle EJ issues? *

Environmental Justice Resolution (Click Link) - <https://www.cityofevanston.org/home/showpublisheddocument?id=59213>

As mentioned above, the Environmental Justice resolution should be followed by a full-fledged EJ ordinance. The next steps in the coming months include developing a definition of EJ areas and mapping key assets and hazards. Adopting CARP implementation, which centers equity as a guiding principle, as a formal City goal and adequately funding the Sustainability Department will allow City staff to be fully trained on EJ issues.

5. Building energy consumption is the greatest source of greenhouse gas emissions in Evanston. Assertive action and meaningful behavior change to address building energy consumption are needed to mitigate the gravest impacts of the climate crisis. Would you endorse: *

Yes

No

Maybe

Updating the building code to require LEED Gold Certification or higher on new construction?

Updating the building code to improve overall building energy efficiency beyond the minimum requirements of the State of Illinois Energy Conservation Code?

6. List 1-3 of your ideas to engage and educate the public so that Evanstonians have the knowledge and resources to address the climate crisis. *

Idea #1

It's outside the realm of the City Council, but the role of Evanston's schools, both D65 and ETHS, is critical both in terms of promoting environmental awareness and educating future leaders as well as incorporating sustainable practices in their operations. The District 65 Green Team is great but they can't do the work alone.

Idea #2

The City of Evanston should lead by example, whether it's solar panels on City buildings, all-electric City vehicles, purchasing renewably generated electricity, or moving towards all electric buildings.

Idea #3

A creative marketing campaign with a better brand identity than "CARP" could really engage the public in the fight for climate progress.

7. List 1-3 of your ideas to ensure that our most vulnerable residents are prepared for the challenges of climate change such as extreme heat, flooding, etc. and that they know where to get support when facing such challenges. *

Ensuring that basic human needs of all residents are met—particularly the most vulnerable—is fundamental to preparing for climate change. The City Health Department has been crucial in the community response to Covid and should be an essential part of this work.

Idea #1

Partner or collaborate with established non-profit groups and places of worship on education and outreach as well as operational solutions such as warming/cooling centers.

Idea #2

Make sure all aldermen and other community leaders are adequately equipped to provide support and resources. The Health Department's Medical Reserve Corps can be a model for how to enlist residents in working hand-in-hand with City departments to support others in the community.

Idea #3

Establish a "Neighbors Helping Neighbors" program, building on the existing network developed by the City Health Department.

8. Would you endorse: *

	Yes	No	Maybe
A pathway to free beach access for all?	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
An affordable pathway to lead pipe replacement?	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

9. How would you advance green infrastructure in Evanston? *

Info: <https://www.epa.gov/green-infrastructure/what-green-infrastructure>

The first steps to advancing green infrastructure is to complete a comprehensive stormwater management plan (currently in development), which requires a detailed hydrologic and hydraulic model covering the entire city. Once we understand how our current infrastructure will handle anticipated future conditions, we can target green improvements more effectively. The City should follow MWRD's technical guidance for the design and deployment of green infrastructure on City property (porous pavement, bioswales, rain gardens, etc.) as well as promote and enable green infrastructure on private property (green roofs, rain harvesting, etc.) Following CMAP's vision, I favor de-paving whenever possible and including the urban forest and green spaces, especially Natural Areas, in a broader approach to green infrastructure.

10. Reducing food waste is a top climate solution. The USDA estimates that 30-40% of food is wasted in the US, while as many as 14% of Evanston residents may be food insecure. List 1-3 ideas to ensure all people in Evanston have enough healthy food to eat. *

The USDA estimates that 30 - 40% of food is wasted in the US. <https://www.usda.gov/foodwaste/faqs> 14% of Evanston residents may be food insecure. <https://icma.org/articles/article/evanston-il-producemobile-continues-provide-fresh-fruits-and-vegetables-community>

Idea #1

Promote local agriculture and expand the existing community garden program to include more City property.

Idea #2

Promote food sharing programs such as Edible Evanston's.

11. List 1-3 ideas to combat food waste in Evanston, including at schools. *

Idea #1

Connect restaurant, grocery, and food service operations with food banks and homeless shelters so excess or soon-to-expire food won't be wasted.

Idea #2

Require composting, including at schools. Education is a crucial component.

12. Would you endorse: *

	Yes	No	Maybe
A path to ban all single-use plastics, including shopping bags?	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Expanding bulk shopping options at stores?	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

13. How would you support a circular economy in Evanston? *

Info: <https://www.ellenmacarthurfoundation.org/circular-economy/concept>

In addition to the concepts offered above, I'll add one more: I would love for all Evanston restaurants to collaborate on a reusable "to-go" container initiative.

14. List 1-3 ideas you have to advance climate-friendly transportation and mobility in Evanston, either through project investments or big picture changes to urban development planning. *

Expanding on the "15-minute neighborhood" concept mentioned above, we should lean into our strengths as a walkable community and embrace our access to public transportation. With various small business districts throughout Evanston, including three in the Fourth Ward, we're perfectly situated to make this happen. I support a new neighborhood school in the 5th Ward for this and many other reasons. I support a balanced approach to transit-oriented development.

15. Would you endorse: *

Yes

No

Maybe

Preserving large native trees on private land?

More info -

<http://content.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,1635842,00.html>

Requiring bird-friendly construction on new buildings and renovations, like Chicago and New York City? More info -

<https://studiogang.com/publication/Chicago-tribune-safer-migration-chicago-birds>

Leaving leaves to decompose on city properties, rather than hauling them? More info - <https://awaytogarden.com/fall-cleanup-with-ecology-in-mind-with-doug-tallamy/>

Expanding the city ban on gas, propane and electric leaf blowers? More info -

https://library.municode.com/il/evanston/codes/code_of_ordinances?nodeId=TIT9PUSA_CH5GEOF_9-5-20NOPR

and

<https://www.dec.ny.gov/chemical/109428.html>

Additional Comments

Thank you Citizens' Greener Evanston for continuing to advocate for climate action and environmental justice! I'm proud to have led CGE's campaign to implement Community Electricity Choice Aggregation with renewable energy back in 2011--our carbon footprint is much smaller thanks to all our work!

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