

Chicago's Green Stormwater Infrastructure Strategy

What is Chicago's Green Stormwater Infrastructure Strategy, and why does it matter?

- Chicago's Green Stormwater Infrastructure Strategy is the city's roadmap for deciding **where to build and how to maintain 'green' projects that soak up stormwater** – like rain gardens, bioswales, or underground tanks – to help reduce flooded basements, street ponding, and sewage overflows.
- Because Chicago's sewers carry rainwater **and** household sewage in the same pipes, heavy storms can force polluted water into the river or your basement. Green projects keep some of that water out of the sewers by diverting stormwater from pipes and preventing overflows in the first place.



Photo courtesy of Center for Neighborhood Technology.

What might Green Stormwater Infrastructure look like in my community?

Green stormwater systems may look like rain gardens, vegetated sunken areas called swales, green roofs, tree trenches, and permeable pavers or pavement. They also may include large-scale items like underground storage tanks to hold and slowly release stormwater.

Why is Chicago's Green Stormwater Infrastructure Strategy being updated now?

- A new **federal water-quality permit** adopted in 2024 requires Chicago to refresh its 2014 Green Infrastructure Strategy, considering environmental justice concerns when deciding where green projects could be most beneficial.
- The City of Chicago is required by federal standards to update this plan.
- **This update is our chance to push the city to target neighborhoods hit hardest by flooding, improving residents' quality of life, along with meeting pollution rules that protect water quality.**

The Flooding and Sewage Coalition's goals for Chicago's Green Stormwater Infrastructure Strategy

1. **Put flood-prone communities first.** Green Infrastructure sites should be chosen with community flood data, not only sewer-overflow data.
2. **Green AND gray solutions.** The current Green Stormwater Infrastructure Plan leans more into natural solutions like permeable pavement, bioswales, and rain gardens. The Coalition would love to see more gray solutions as well, like large-diameter sewers and pumps **plus** green infrastructure where both are needed.
3. **Center community voices.** The City of Chicago must aim to work in conjunction with residents to set priorities and track progress before, during, and after construction.

How you can stay involved

- **Share your flood story:** Contact your local elected officials or community-based organizations and share your story.
- **Attend public meetings this summer!** The City of Chicago regularly updates its website with information on public meetings you may be able to attend to learn more/provide comment on the Green Infrastructure Strategy.
- **Listen up for when the city updates its draft plan in the fall of 2025.**
- **Spread the word:** Forward updates to neighbors, social media, or local organizations.

Organizations and agencies supporting the Flooding and Sewage Coalition's Community Advisory Committee:

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| • Alliance for the Great Lakes | • Little Village Environmental Justice Organization |
| • Calumet Collaborative | • NeighborSpace |
| • Center for Neighborhood Technology | • Southeast Environmental Task Force |
| • Equitable Resilience and Sustainability | |