

# Flooding and Sewage Coalition

## Background

A multi-organizational coalition is addressing inequities in flooding and sewage impacts through the development and implementation of complete solutions, applying a community-centered, co-creation approach. Our coalition aims to address stormwater and wastewater infrastructure needs in vulnerable communities in the South Suburbs of Cook County, Chicago's South and West Sides, and Northwest Indiana, recognizing the interrelatedness of this region.



*Photo courtesy of Center for Neighborhood Technology.*

## Community Advisory Committee

A critical aspect of our coalition is the Community Advisory Committee. This committee brings together resident leaders from frontline communities to share lived experiences, co-create policy recommendations, and co-develop outreach and organizing strategies so that solutions to persistent flooding, sewage backups, and overflows are adopted and implemented by decision makers.

## Why Is This Important?

Frequent flooding and sewage backups disproportionately affect Black, Latinae, and other vulnerable communities, leading to property damage, compounding public health risks and economic instability, and profoundly diminishing quality of life. With new commitments from the City of Chicago and Cook County to address historical disinvestment in Chicago's South and West Sides and the South Suburbs, we have a unique opportunity to address persistent community flooding and sewage backups. In Indiana communities, we have the opportunity to stand with our Illinois peers as they develop strategies that we can in turn deploy in our own communities, even as we face different levels of government support. This project brings community voices together to ensure they are at the center of decision-making for long-term change.

## Why We Want You to Join the Conversation

This project is about creating meaningful change – **for community, by community.**

- **Community Voice Matters:** Helps ensure solutions are grounded in real-world experiences.
- **Collaborative Effort:** Consists of a network of leaders working toward a shared goal.
- **Impactful Outcomes:** Actively creating a framework that drives stormwater and wastewater investments and addresses historic inequities.
- **Informed and co-created by a committee of community advisors and other engaged residents who:**
  - Help guide conversations around you and your community members' shared lived experiences, helping inform and ground policy and decision-making.
  - Activate networks and local communities toward policy opportunities.
  - Advise on larger outreach and engagement strategy for communities.
  - Educate to inform your own local communities of flooding and sewage issues and policy opportunities.
  - Advise local agencies responsible for developing and implementing stormwater and wastewater infrastructure projects and policies, including but not limited to the local ones.
  - Advise government agencies that handle other topics, services, and resources besides stormwater and wastewater, including but not limited to local ones.
  - Co-develop strategies to engage all governments and agencies (e.g. housing agencies) that are critical to developing and implementing comprehensive solutions.

## Why This Opportunity Is Unique

Expanding on previous initiatives, this effort is:

- **Community-Centered and Coalitional:** Prioritizing input from the most affected communities in collaboration with both Community-Based Organizations and Government Organizations.
- **Action-Oriented:** This opportunity comes at a time when the City of Chicago's updated Green Infrastructure Strategy is actively taking public feedback and comments. Over \$650 million of Community Development Block Grant-Disaster Recovery (CDBG-DR) federal grant funding is also coming to Chicago and surrounding municipalities. These policy implementation opportunities are also opportunities to advocate for a new framework to govern decision-making and resource allocation, such as a Flooding and Sewage Vulnerability Assessment Tool, which can guide agency policy action.
- **Timely and Urgent:** With new commitments and agency-led policy and planning initiatives, there is opportunity for positive change for many frontline communities - we aim to seize that!
- **Comprehensive and Long-Term:** Our approach also acknowledges that advancing such changes is a huge lift, even in the geographies with the most immediate opportunities. In addition, we recognize that there is less immediate government or agency-led opportunity in some of our frontline communities and that, regardless of location in our region, all communities hit with chronic flooding and sewage could benefit from more comprehensive solutions that may take several years to advance.

## How Your Feedback May Translate to Tangible Results:

- **Informs Immediate and Long-Term Policy:** Your participation can shape immediate policy processes that governments are already advancing and can also surface longer-term policy approaches both in Chicago and our broader region.
- **Builds Long-Term Change to How Policy Is Developed:** We aim to create a foundation for continued collaboration and strategizing between community members, organizations, and government agencies.

## Contact:

Bre'Shaun Reddick, Project Manager | [breddick@greatlakes.org](mailto:breddick@greatlakes.org)



*Photo courtesy of Center for Neighborhood Technology.*

## Organizations and Agencies Committed to Supporting the Community Advisory Committee:

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