

**Lee, Chris**

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**From:** Marya Bradley <mabstream@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Sunday, June 11, 2023 2:39 PM  
**To:** Lee, Chris  
**Cc:** Jackson, Benjamin (CC); Mayor  
**Subject:** Climate and Equity Plan

To the Honorable Members of the Common Council and the Honorable Mayor Cavalier Johnson,

I am writing as a citizen of the City of Milwaukee to express my strong support for the goals and strategies set forward in the Climate and Equity Plan. I write with a special sense of urgency in the midst of unprecedented air pollution from the terrifying wildfires consuming the boreal forest in Canada and in the evidenced and long-predicted patterns of drought, wildfires, extreme winds and flooding our human failure to act swiftly to shift away from our old fossil fuel reliance and infrastructure has set in motion and accelerated with each procrastination on our part. There are many critical provisions in the Climate and Equity Plan and each one is important and significantly interdependent in the over-arching plan. I support the whole of the plan, but want to especially address one aspect as being essential to the whole and immediately critical to commit to, and that is the portion of the plan "Urban Forestry and green infrastructure", which recognizes the need to invest in conserving and restoring the natural and wild areas and land both that already exists in the city and county and that can be reclaimed and transformed to serve in meeting climate change, in human health and community improvement, and biodiversity and ecological health. For too long the city's and county's trees, parks, wildspaces and waterways have been neglected and underfunded as though they had little significance beyond their utility to us for aesthetic and recreational enjoyment. Now, however, finally we are slowly recovering a deeper and truer understanding that our human lives and communities need the natural world to be healthy and to flourish if we are to be healthy and survive in this time of climate crises we have unleashed.

At present almost half of the land on which the city of Milwaukee is built is sealed under concrete or asphalt or some such impenetrable surface, and everywhere this is the case, we are seeing an intensification of both heat and flooding as well as a huge amount of litter and a crowding out of native healthy plant life by invasive species that further undermine biodiversity and human care for these spaces. Obviously this leads to urban wastelands, physical and emotional health problems, higher energy costs, greater pollution, waste water problems, water contamination and a loss of places to recreate, garden, relax, and be restored and inspired for those in these neighborhoods at the same as it is financially onerous for both residents and the city and, finally, environmentally disastrous both in the present and locally but also for the future and globally.

Indeed, in keeping with the lack of real investment in the urban forests and green infrastructure, there has been as well a loss of contact with the value of other species--both plant and animal-- and thus a loss of a sense of community, of care of place and of stewardship and reciprocity. Once people are able to enjoy and have a role in caring for nature and can experience first hand and directly the benefit of trees and gardens, learn about, encounter and appreciate other living species and the interdependence of species, there is a return to a sense of caring about a place and being a part of a larger community of care and meaning. The practical and the social and spiritual all are part of the ways in which the investment in the urban forest and green infrastructure matter. With this in view, I want to strongly advocate for support for and commitment to invest generously and reliably in the following recommended actions:

I urge you to commit

1. to conserve existing natural habitats and to invest in and sustain the reintroduction of native trees and plants along with the culling of those that are invasive and crowding out native plants and trees. This is important both in existing natural habitats and in places that are currently desolate and paved over.
2. to protect environmentally sensitive lands, such as the Lake bluff, the riparian borders and ravines, forests and wetlands and prairies and to preserve them safe from development. This involves recognizing the need to make strategic decisions and even zoning certain natural spaces as being of special value that must not be sacrificed.
3. to acquire the 4 remaining parcels in the City of Milwaukee and 25 remaining parcels of land in Milwaukee County for conservation.
4. to expand the Green and Healthy Schoolyard Redevelopment Program which replaces asphalt with green spaces.
5. to set in motion and sustain the Branch Out Milwaukee Campaign that will not only maintain the existing canopy of trees in Milwaukee but will increase the number trees and the canopy for the whole city; this initiative will involve developing community partnerships to educate communities about the benefit of the trees and green infrastructure and engage and employ local residents in the work to create and sustain a growing and healthy tree canopy.
6. to create green-cooling commercial lots by creating incentives for private commercial property owners to remove paving from lots and replace them with native trees and plants or even community garden plots.

These are just some broad ways to move the city and county forwards to meet the current climate reality but also to shift away from an old paradigm that sacrifices quality of life and life itself to expedience and short-term profit. The investment in this green infrastructure and the urban forest at the same time is an investment in the well-being of the human communities and the ecology and future of the city as well as an economically wise strategy for the best kind of cultural growth and prosperity of the city and county.

Thank you for considering my comments.

Sincerely,  
Marya Bradley