

Lee, Chris

From: Karen Samelson <ksamelson16@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, June 12, 2023 10:04 AM
To: Lee, Chris; Mayor
Cc: Rainey, Khalif; Floyd, Jasmine; Dimitrijevic, Marina
Subject: Climate and Equity Plan support

June 11, 2023

The Honorable Mayor Cavalier Johnson
Honorable Members of the Common Council
Milwaukee City Hall
200 E Wells Street
Milwaukee, WI 53202

Dear Mr. Mayor and Members of the Common Council:

On behalf of the Nearby Nature Milwaukee Steering Committee, I urge you to formally adopt Milwaukee's Climate and Equity Plan, as approved by the City-County Task Force on Climate and Economic Equity on March 21, 2023. We further request that Milwaukee's Climate and Equity Plan be adopted as part of the city's comprehensive plan, so that it may inform present and future city planning.

Nearby Nature Milwaukee is an environmental justice and equity initiative that believes that the city, like the state and nation, must address the existential threats of climate change and economic inequity. Failure to do so will further exacerbate the social, economic, and environmental challenges that our city faces today.

Our interests include helping northside Milwaukee residents enjoy the natural areas that exist in urban areas of Milwaukee so that they benefit from nature and also want to protect it; restoring greenspaces along Lincoln Creek on land owned by the Milwaukee Metropolitan Sewerage District for flood control; and developing Black environmental leaders who can help build stronger, healthier communities.

Through our work, we are keenly aware of the problems including flooding, poor air quality, and urban heat islands that have been exacerbated by climate change. We also are keenly aware of the racial inequities in Milwaukee that mean these problems hit harder in low-income communities that also lag in access to nature, to bike paths, to transportation, and to jobs that pay family-supporting wages.

The proposed Climate and Equity Plan addresses the interconnected issues of climate and economic equity. As directed by the Milwaukee Common Council and Milwaukee County Board, the City-County Task Force has developed a Climate and Equity Plan to "address the ongoing climate crisis, ensuring Milwaukee meets the obligations set by scientists for necessary greenhouse gas reduction, and mitigating racial and economic inequity through 'green' jobs."

The Climate and Equity Plan provides a roadmap for achieving two goals:

- Reduce Milwaukee's community-wide net greenhouse gas emissions by at least 45% by the year 2030 and achieve net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050 or sooner.

- Reduce racial and income inequality in Milwaukee by assuring that greenhouse gas reduction investments and policies create the maximum number of permanent living wage green jobs for people who live in the most impoverished neighborhoods with limited economic opportunity.

Milwaukee's Climate and Equity Plan is both forward-looking and cost-effective. It will enable us to solve multiple problems at once, thereby making the most effective use of resources. Many of the local issues that city leaders and residents care about -- such as affordable housing, high energy burdens, transportation, workforce development, water management, access to nature, and community health -- are addressed in the plan. For example, the proposal to make homes more energy efficient will decrease carbon emissions while also reducing energy costs for residents - and creating new green jobs to expand the workforce. Likewise, the recommended implementation of Complete Streets provides an example of how we can reduce auto emissions while making our city safer for drivers and pedestrians.

Once Milwaukee has adopted the Climate and Equity Plan, it will be better positioned to apply for climate and equity related funding from the Bipartisan Infrastructure Act and the Inflation Reduction Act.

The enactment of Milwaukee's Climate and Equity Plan will likely be one of the most important local pieces of legislation in our lifetime. It aligns with the Common Council's 2017 resolution to support the Paris Climate Accord and it reflects two years of work by community leaders and residents. Now is the time for public officials to honor that commitment and join other cities such as Cincinnati and Minneapolis, which have formally adopted climate action plans tailored to the specific needs of their communities.

We believe that every resident of Milwaukee deserves a healthy climate, a safe neighborhood, and a living-wage job. We urge you to take advantage of this opportunity to lead our community in adopting the Climate and Equity Plan as the first step in making that vision a reality.

Sincerely,

Karen Samelson
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