

LET'S MAKE WEST TOWN A
LEADER IN SUSTAINABILITY



Native Plant Garden Rendering, Photo Credit: Eric Formato



Photo credit: Kate McKenna

LET'S MAKE WEST TOWN A LEADER IN SUSTAINABILITY

West Town's frequent flooding is both an environmental and economic problem. Floods not only erode our infrastructure and environment, but they threaten small and large businesses as well. Creating an urban framework that improves stormwater management, energy efficiency, and benefits endangered local species is surprisingly affordable and will help make West Town a more beautiful place to live and work.

During community outreach, over 75% of surveyed residents with basements reported flooding and nearly half of respondents wanted more greenspace. By promoting energy efficiency, the sale and use of natural consumer goods, planting native vegetation, and community gardening, we can protect our neighbors from frequent flooding and also make West Town a leader in sustainability in Chicago.

There is both a need and demand for more green infrastructure. However, creating a more sustainable community requires more than the commitment of the City and business owners. The entire community must come together to build a proactive green community. Together we can educate and empower everyone to do their part to support green infrastructure and development by taking the following actions.



Photo Source: Commercialpark.org



GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE

(PARTNERSHIPS: CNT, LOCAL RESIDENTS GROUPS, AND ALDERMANIC OFFICES)

Our first recommendation is to promote installation of and education about green infrastructure in Chicago. By employing a variety of tools that reduce stormwater runoff and create more energy-efficient homes and businesses, we can enjoy a cleaner and more sustainable West Town.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

- Learn more about sustainable practices, new regulatory policy changes, and how you can implement them in and around your property. Be on the lookout for information on these practices to be published by the Chamber.
- Petition your Alderman for green alleyways, permeable pavements, bioswales, bump-outs, and other low-impact developments that help mitigate flooding and promote native plant havens for bees and butterflies.

WHAT WE CAN DO

- Create a list of practices—like weatherization, electric bill reduction practices, flood mitigation, and native plant havens—that homeowners, business owners, and renters can begin to incorporate into their lives.

WHAT THEY CAN DO

- Provide incentives for green businesses and developments.
- Provide information on energy efficient rebates.
- Support policies that encourage sustainable efforts.
- Encourage and incentivize businesses and developments to seek LEED certification.



Photo Credit: Homestead on the Roof





Photo Credit: Kate McKenna

RAIN READYSM AND LEED CERTIFICATION

(PARTNERSHIPS: CNT AND ALDERMANIC OFFICES)

Our second recommendation is to provide educational resources from the Chicago Center for Neighborhood Technology's RainReadySM program and LEED certification programs to encourage more RainReadySM and LEED installations. RainReadySM and LEED certifications are effective because they protect properties against costly flood damage while reducing energy costs and the overall environmental impact of buildings.

See Appendix 10 for details on RainReadySM and LEED Certification

WHAT YOU CAN DO

- Learn more about what these practices mean and what you can do in and around your property to reduce your environmental impact.
- Act upon this knowledge by installing green infrastructure in and around your property.
- Share your knowledge by encouraging your neighbors to install green infrastructure.
- Connect with programs like RainReadySM at the Center for Neighborhood Technology (CNT) for a property evaluation.

WHAT WE CAN DO

- Publish a detailed "how-to" guide for RainReadySM and LEED installations.
- Partner with CNT and Aldermanic offices to create a network to support residents, businesses, and homeowners in their sustainable efforts.

WHAT THEY CAN DO

- Aldermen can provide RainReadySM related information to constituents when asked about flooding issues in their neighborhoods.



- Advocate for city-wide sustainability efforts and policies.
- Publish sustainability information for distribution to community members.
- Provide incentives and advocate for LEED installation on new and existing developments.
- Host community-centric sustainability events such as “Clean and Green” activities.

REJUVENATING BUTTERFLY AND NATIVE BEE POPULATIONS

(PARTNERSHIPS: LOCAL GARDEN SHOPS, LOCAL COMMUNITY GARDENS, AND CONSERVATION GROUPS)

Our third recommendation is to help rejuvenate butterfly and native bee populations by creating and maintaining community gardens and promoting the use of pollinator plants to mitigate flooding issues in the neighborhood. Butterflies and native bee populations have suffered greatly in recent years. Despite playing a vital role in flower growth, butterflies and bees continue to struggle to find pollinator plants. The good news is that it’s easy and inexpensive to to protect our butterfly and bee populations.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

- Create a native plant garden in your backyard.
- Talk to your Aldermen and community garden groups about the importance of planting pollinator plants in parks, the public way, and underutilized spaces.
- Garden supply businesses can provide native seeds and plants, label their native seeds and plants as “West Town Friendly” or “Native to Chicago,” and encourage their purchase.
- Get involved with your local gardening groups.
- Participate in workshops at your local garden shop.

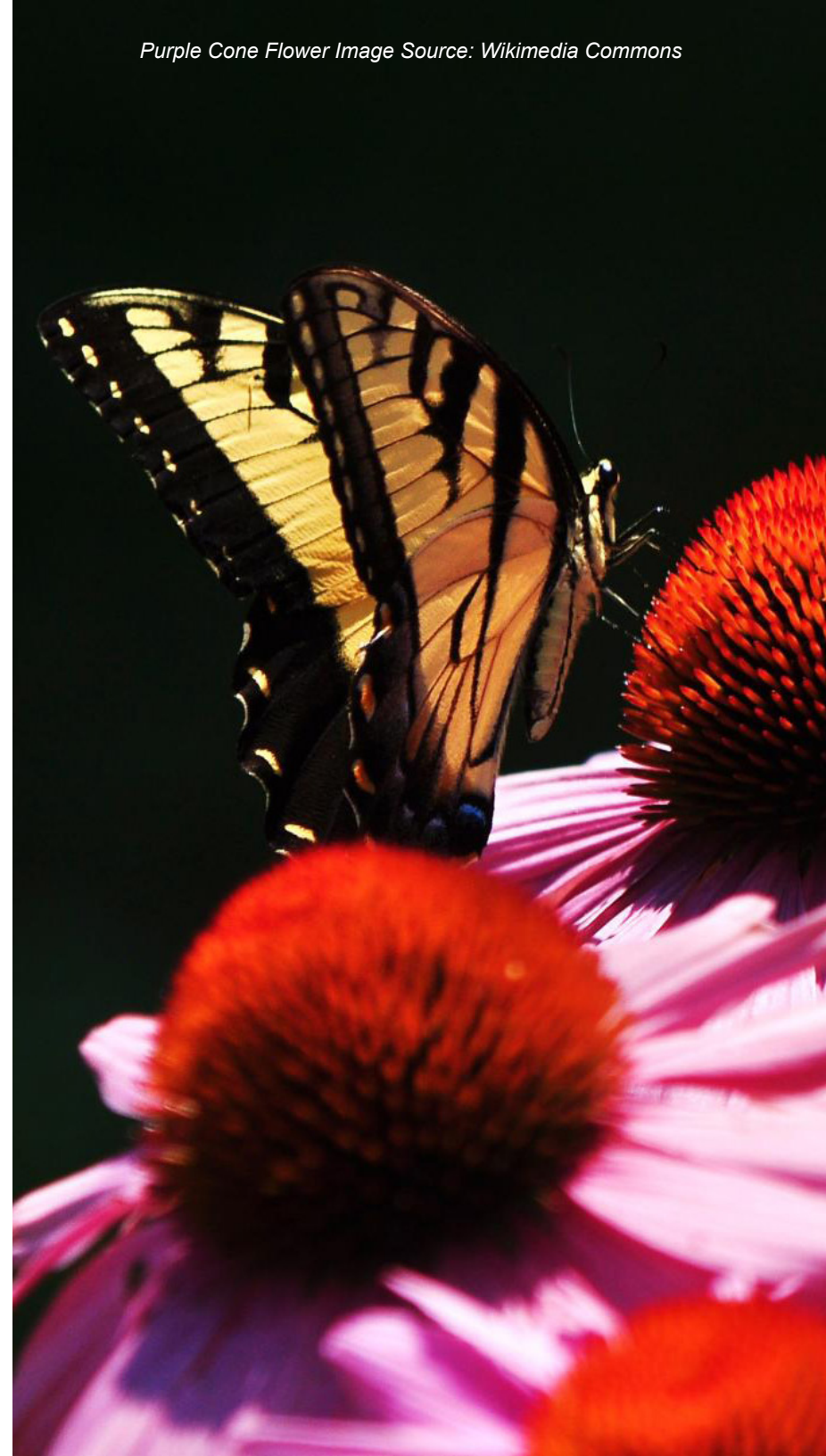




Photo Credit: Kate McKenna

WHAT WE CAN DO

- Publish informational material on plants native to the Chicagoland region, how they benefit native wildlife, and how they can help absorb rain and pollutants.
- Program local garden walks and tours to promote our beautiful neighborhoods.
- Foster relationships with local plant and garden shops to encourage the sale of native plants and label them appropriately for consumers.
- Publish ways to bring attention to native pollinator plants.

WHAT THEY CAN DO

- Mandate that our park departments adopt new guidelines to protect and encourage the planting of pollinator plants in our parks.
- Create and enforce design guidelines that transform the public way into native plant havens.



Photo Credit: Kate McKenna





Image Source: CBS Chicago

The More You Know

Flooding is common in urban areas, especially Chicago. While flood damage is often associated with overflowing rivers and floodplains, urban flood damage is often caused by poor stormwater management. When our urban environment is dominated by impermeable surfaces like concrete or tightly packed sod, water has no place to go except to seep into basements or collect in overflowing drains. These problems can be addressed holistically with improved infrastructure, buildings, and landscaping that better manages water. By partnering with organizations like the Center for Neighborhood Technology (CNT) and exploring natural solutions to stormwater management, we can better protect our homes and businesses from costly flood damage while also beautifying our neighborhood.



Image Source: RainReady.org



