

## **CITIZENS GREENER EVANSTON QUESTIONNAIRE**

Response of Melissa Wynne, 3<sup>rd</sup> Ward Alderman

### ***1. What are the top 3 things you have done in your personal life to reduce your own, or your family's environmental impact?***

First, to reduce our transportation-related carbon footprint, we:

- (a) drive two Toyota Prius hybrids (~50 mpg),
- (b) minimize driving, and
- (c) walk/bike as many places as possible.

Second, to reduce our household's environmental impact, we:

- (a) rigorously reduce/reuse/recycle, including by composting yard waste and food scraps;
- (b) eliminated herbicides and pesticides in our lawn maintenance and gardening;
- (c) avoid A/C except on blazingly hot days, and maintain our winter thermostat at or below 68 degrees; and
- (d) retrofitted with Energy Star appliances, a high-efficiency HVAC system, double-pane windows, low-flow water faucets, and LED lighting wherever possible.

Third, to advance environmental advocacy, I've long been a committed supporter of the Sierra Club and the Natural Resources Defense Council.

### ***2. List 1-4 steps you would take to help implement the CARP plan incorporating key City departments and decision-making processes.***

#1. Work closely on waste reduction strategies with the City's Office of Sustainability, Community Development, Health & Human Services, Public Works and Administrative Services. These are the critical City departments at the focal point of Evanston's actions to reduce & divert waste by 50% by 2025 as called for by CARP.

#2. Provide strong Council support for the work of Community Development, Health & Human Services and Public Works & Administrative Services in developing policies and implementing methodologies to meet the CARP goals of 25% reduction in energy consumption by 2025 and 100% renewable electricity by 2030.

#3. Continue my Council advocacy for the CARP Policy Engagement Strategy to ensure that those most impacted by CARP policies are adequately notified, informed, and – most importantly – invited to participate and collaborate in developing these policies.

### ***3. What are your top environmental or climate priorities for the City?***

The key next steps for Evanston are the CARP interim goals for 2025 and 2035, specifically: (1) increasing our waste diversion to 50% by 2025, (2) reducing our building energy use by 25% by 2025, and (3) achieving 100% renewable electricity by 2030. I will continue my

unwavering advocacy on the Council for adhering to each of these critical goals, and provide strong ongoing leadership in implementing the entirety of CARP going forward.

***4. The City just passed an Environmental Justice Resolution. What steps should be taken to ensure that Environmental Justice (EJ) is incorporated into City Code and that all City staff is trained to identify and tackle EJ issues?***

*Environmental Justice Resolution (Click Link) -*

<https://www.cityofevanston.org/home/showpublisheddocument?id=59213>

As a strong advocate for the EJ Resolution (both on the Council and on the Equity & Empowerment Commission), I understand well that two next steps are critical to realizing the Resolution's principles and goals:

(1) We must continue our close collaboration with community groups (such as Citizens Greener Evanston) to draft ordinance language that implements the principles of the EJ Resolution.

(2) We must be vigilant in ensuring that all members of the City's staff are trained to understand how equity issues inform every aspect of City planning and development decisions.

***5. Building energy consumption is the greatest source of greenhouse gas emissions in Evanston. Assertive action and meaningful behavior change to address building energy consumption are needed to mitigate the gravest impacts of the climate crisis. Would you endorse:***

*Updating the building code to require LEED Gold Certification or higher on new construction?*

Yes

*Updating the building code to improve overall building energy efficiency beyond the minimum requirements of the State of Illinois Energy Conservation Code?*

Yes

***6. List 1-3 of your ideas to engage and educate the public so that Evanstonians have the knowledge and resources to address the climate crisis.***

#1. Work closely with the schools on sustainability education: as we've seen with other initiatives (for example, distracted driving programs), when children learn about an important issue in school, they bring it home to their families and help move the whole household forward.

#2. Build on the City's excellent program of pandemic messaging: the people of Evanston have tuned in, seriously and in widespread numbers, to the City's COVID messaging (in the Mayor's calls, the City newsletters, and other public announcements). The key to our success in this program was providing useful, reliable, accurate and up-to-date information on a matter of broad public significance. We should build on this foundation, regularly picking a

topic and focusing citizens on the available City resources and concretely teaching best practices for each of us to implement at home – for example, feasible ways to increase personal habits of reducing/reusing/recycling.

#3. Hold regular City educational meetings in the neighborhoods: We need to address Evanstonians in their neighborhoods – social media and email are not enough. Working with community partners (churches, neighborhood schools, community leaders), we should convene regular educational meetings to (a) teach actionable methods for each of us to implement climate responsibility in our daily lives, and (b) connect residents with the best City, State and Federal resources to help in implementing those steps.

***7. List 1-3 of your ideas to ensure that our most vulnerable residents are prepared for the challenges of climate change such as extreme heat, flooding, etc. and that they know where to get support when facing such challenges.***

We must expand the City’s Residential Rehab program, which provides funds to low-income residents to repair, retrofit and weatherize their homes for climate resiliency. To ensure broad awareness of this program (as well as others available during emergencies), we need to make use of all the communication and education channels identified in response to Question #6 above.

***8. Would you endorse:***

***A pathway to free beach access for all?***

Maybe

***An affordable pathway to lead pipe replacement?***

Yes

***9. How would you advance green infrastructure in Evanston?***

Info: <https://www.epa.gov/green-infrastructure/what-green-infrastructure>

I will continue my strong support for green infrastructure initiatives already in progress in Evanston, including (1) our implementation of permeable paving in parking lots, (2) bioswales like the one we installed next to the parking lot in the 900 block of Hinman Avenue, (3) rain gardens like the one in the park behind the Civic Center, (4) native plantings such as those we have supported along the lakefront, and (5) maintaining our urban tree canopy through vigilant protection of our elms and other heritage trees.

***10. Reducing food waste is a top climate solution. The USDA estimates that 30-40% of food is wasted in the US, while as many as 14% of Evanston residents may be food insecure. List 1-3 ideas to ensure all people in Evanston have enough healthy food to eat.***

The USDA estimates that 30 - 40% of food is wasted in the US. <https://www.usda.gov/foodwaste/faqs> 14% of Evanston residents may be food insecure. <https://icma.org/articles/article/evanston-il-producemobile-continues-provide-fresh-fruits-and-vegetables-community>

I will continue my strong advocacy for: (1) the ProduceMobile, which provides fresh fruits & vegetables on a monthly basis to Evanston residents in need; (2) community gardens at schools, churches and in our parks (the ETHS Edible Acre and Talking Farm programs are particularly impressive public efforts); and (3) encouraging and educating Evanstonians in the remarkable potential for backyard produce gardening.

***11. List 1-3 ideas to combat food waste in Evanston, including at schools.***

Accessible education is critical here (see response to Question #6 above). We cannot simply shame people about food waste; instead, we must educate Evanstonians about (a) the impact of food waste, and (b) how to avoid it. I envision a 21<sup>st</sup> century “home & food economics” curriculum in our schools and neighborhood outreach. Just as we now teach personal finance at ETHS, we all need education in sustainable living – in effect, a program of “environmental economics for the home.”

***12. Would you endorse:***

***A path to ban all single-use plastics, including shopping bags?***

Yes

***Expanding bulk shopping options at stores?***

Yes

***13. How would you support a circular economy in Evanston?***

Info: <https://www.ellenmacarthurfoundation.org/circular-economy/concept>

Ideally, the principles of a circular economy (designing out waste & pollution, keeping products & materials in use, and regenerating natural systems) would be incorporated into the U.S. economy on a nationwide basis. But there are a number of circular economy measures we can implement at the local level. An excellent local example of a not-for-profit that realizes the ideals of a circular economy is the Evanston Rebuilding Warehouse. They provide an extraordinary demonstration, in our own back yard, of how to save and reuse the full gamut of household and building materials – everything from decorative fireplaces to elaborate chandeliers to toilets and household appliances. Critically, the Evanston Rebuilding Warehouse also accomplishes this mission while re-training Evanston residents with deconstruction and repair/renovation skills. But there is much more that we can do. I strongly support a close study of the circular economy measures implemented in Austin, Texas, in order to identify other Evanston-appropriate programs for building out a circular economy in our town.

***14. List 1-3 ideas you have to advance climate-friendly transportation and mobility in Evanston, either through project investments or big picture changes to urban development planning.***

I have been one of the Council’s strongest advocates for the full range of climate-friendly transport initiatives, including (1) bike lanes and bike paths that comprehensively cover the

city, with a safe and user-friendly network that allows bicycle transport throughout Evanston; (2) expanded Divvy stations that provide equitable access to bicycle transportation for all of our residents; (3) transit-oriented development that leverages our location next to two major mass-transit networks, the CTA and Metra; (4) aggressive expansion of EV (electric vehicle) charging stations ahead of the rapidly-approaching EV wave; and (5) sustained focus on ensuring that sidewalks and curb cuts are safe and accessible throughout all of our neighborhoods.

### **15. Would you endorse:**

*Preserving large native trees on private land? More info -*

<http://content.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,1635842,00.html>

Yes

*Requiring bird-friendly construction on new buildings and renovations, like Chicago and New York City? More info - <https://studiogang.com/publication/Chicago-tribune-safer-migration-chicago-birds>*

Yes

*Leaving leaves to decompose on city properties, rather than hauling them? More info -*

<https://awaytogarden.com/fall-cleanup-with-ecology-in-mind-with-doug-tallamy/>

Yes

*Expanding the city ban on gas, propane and electric leaf blowers? More info -*

[https://library.municode.com/il/evanston/codes/code\\_of\\_ordinances?nodetid=TIT9PUSA\\_CH5GEO\\_F\\_9-5-20NOPR](https://library.municode.com/il/evanston/codes/code_of_ordinances?nodetid=TIT9PUSA_CH5GEO_F_9-5-20NOPR) and <https://www.dec.ny.gov/chemical/109428.html>

Yes

### **Additional Comments**

I have been a longtime Council champion for a wide range of green initiatives in our City. I strongly supported: the creation of the Sustainability Coordinator position within our budget; the Green Building Ordinance; the Energy Benchmark Ordinance; the Electrical Aggregation Program, which results in significant savings to every household in Evanston; the Environmental Justice Resolution; and the Natural Areas Ordinance. I was the deciding vote on eliminating plastic bags in Evanston. I supported the conversion of our City fleet to vehicles that run on biodiesel fuel and I continue to advocate for the transition to 100% electric vehicles. I was a critical voice on the Council in maintaining our Dutch Elm inoculation program, when City staff suggested major cuts. I am working with fellow Council members on a Heritage Tree Protection ordinance, and greater regulation of leaf blowers, with the ultimate goal of eliminating them entirely.

Much of my focus on the Council has been on protecting and enhancing the unique natural and environmental assets of the 3rd Ward. I came to the Council with a firm grasp on environmental policy from my law practice (I specialized in environmental law) and from my volunteer work on the Environmental Board. I leveraged that knowledge to help craft the Lakefront Master Plan that protects and preserves our lakefront as non-commercial and open to all. The lakefront is our largest open space in the Ward and a critical quality of life asset that enriches the lives of all Evanstonians.