



### **Mayors Commission on Water Equity**

#### *Field Hearing on Promoting Water Equity in Great Lakes Cities and Safeguarding the Transformative Potential of the Infrastructure Law*

Testimony of Mayor Daniel Biss, Evanston, IL  
One Water Summit  
September 15, 2022

The City of Evanston is deeply committed to water equity, and is pleased to be pursuing a number of initiatives in this direction, in many instances in partnership with other levels of government. These partnerships range in nature from a (critical) reliance on state and federal funds, to compliance with a variety of mandates, to utilization of technical support and guidance.

In 2021, the State of Illinois enacted a law obligating municipalities to replace all of their lead service lines over a number of years, becoming one of only three states to have such a statute on the books. Though compliance with this law will be enormously expensive, and though other municipalities opposed its passage, the City of Evanston applauded this accomplishment and looks forward to achieving full compliance.

That said, the City simply cannot pay for this enormous amount of critical work on its own. As of September 1, 2022, the City has replaced 92 lead services lines as part of its annual water main replacement program, on the way to an expected 162 replacements this year. This work alone costs approximately \$1.5 million.

Additionally, since 2021, the City has been working to replace the private side of up to 600 lead service lines in low- to moderate-income areas. The cost for this project will be approximately \$4 million and is expected to be funded by a combination of loans from the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency (IEPA) State Revolving Fund (SRF) Public Water Supply Loan Program (PWSLP), as well as a grant from the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity.

This significant progress exists against a daunting backdrop: in all, the City of Evanston must replace in excess of 11,000 lead service lines over 20 years, an undertaking that is expected to cost over \$168 million in 2021 dollars. Without additional outside funding, this would result in more than a 70% rate increase to our retail customers. In other words, we need financial support to accomplish this fundamental step toward water equity, because absent that support the rate ramifications would themselves be profoundly inequitable.

Furthermore, the City recently initiated the Lead Service Line Replacement Workforce Development Program, an innovative effort to train a new generation of workers to remove lead service lines throughout our community. Through the program, the City has committed to hiring seven full time positions to support the removal of lead infrastructure, and has dedicated funds to bolster in-house capacity for lead service line replacement.

The City of Evanston's Lead Service Line Replacement (LSLR) Pilot Project was established to focus on the replacement of private-side lead services in low-to-moderate income areas within the City on a "first-come" basis. The pilot project prioritizes private-side lead replacement for homes that have already had public-side lead service lines replaced as part of a previous water main replacement project.

In addition to water quality initiatives, the City also prioritizes stormwater resilience. From 1987 through 2009, the City of Evanston successfully implemented the Long Range Sewer Improvement Program to essentially eliminate basement backups that had previously plagued the City. Today, in the face of more intense rainfalls and an uncertain future climate, the City's stormwater challenges are changing. In 2019, the City prepared a Stormwater Management Guide in line with the goals of the City's Climate Action and Resilience Plan, and now a Stormwater Master Plan is under development. The goal of the planning process is to develop a hydraulic (within the sewers) and hydrologic (overland) model of the City's combined, relief, and storm sewer systems. The model of the entire system will be used to analyze and define needed system improvements under existing and future storm conditions. City staff will use the results to develop a high-level stormwater capital improvement plan for future consideration, which will bolster resilience to the anticipated effects of climate change like urban flooding.

To support these efforts, the City of Evanston has dedicated \$3 million dollars in ARPA funding for water and wastewater infrastructure. The City requires continued support from the federal government in order to remove lead throughout the water system, build resilience to the effects of climate change, and continue to support water equity.