



PRESS RELEASE
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Cities Initiative Launches Richard M. Daley Water Equity Community Award to Provide Support to Disadvantaged Communities

This opportunity will offer assistance in obtaining federal funds for the removal of lead lines and the modernization of water infrastructure.

Chicago – May 8, 2023 – The Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative is proud to announce the creation of the **Richard M. Daley Water Equity Community Award**, which will help provide support to disadvantaged communities who are working to remove lead lines and modernize water infrastructure.

“We are naming this award after former Chicago Mayor Richard M. Daley because of his lifetime commitment to our lakes and rivers,” said Mayor Billy McKinney of Zion, IL, the Chair of the Cities Initiative. “Mayor Daley founded our organization and his work on water issues is unparalleled on national and international levels. We are working with Stantec, a renowned international engineering firm, to provide these services.”



“Climate change is impacting all of us, but it is having a particularly severe impact on communities of color and those with considerable populations below the poverty line,” said former Chicago Mayor Richard M. Daley, now Senior Counsel at the Chicago-based law firm, Katten. “This is one of the reasons why I helped found the Cities Initiative and continue to fight alongside my colleagues for the protection and restoration of our Great Lakes region. It is an honor to have this award named after me.”

The Water Equity Community Award will help disadvantaged communities that lack resources and staff with technical and grant writing support, to facilitate navigating the often-complex process involved in applying for and obtaining current and newly offered public funding.

These communities will also become members of the Cities Initiative, allowing them to work together to advocate, collaborate and educate each other and decisionmakers on water-related priorities.

Today more than ever before

“The greatest number of lead lines in our country happen to be in the Great Lakes region, particularly within disadvantaged communities. This situation is unacceptable given that the Great Lakes are home to 80 percent of North America’s freshwater resources,” stated Mayor Cavalier Johnson of Milwaukee, WI, the Co-Chair of the Mayors Commission on Water Equity. “Today more than ever before, there is a need for a collaborative focus on issues surrounding water equity.”

Flooding is another issue that these communities continuously face. According to the Center for Neighborhood Technology, only 13 zip codes represent nearly three-fourths of the flood damage claims paid in Chicago between 2007 and 2016. In these areas, 93 percent of residents are people of color.

“Our neighboring Great Lakes cities are constantly dealing with floods and other crises due to years of neglect,” said Mayor Justin M. Bibb of Cleveland, OH, the Co-Chair of the Mayors Commission on Water Equity. “The Water Equity Community Award addresses these issues in such a way as to provide ideas and solutions for the long-term.”

About the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative

The Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative is a binational, mayor-led coalition of U.S. and Canadian cities dedicated to the environmental and socioeconomic health of the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence River Basin. With more than 230 member cities, the Cities Initiative is the largest municipally-driven organization in the basin focused on these issues.

Media Contact

Jonathan Altenberg, President/CEO, Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative
Jon.Altenberg@glslcities.org