

Green Era Renewable Energy and Urban Farming Campus

Partnership Proposal

Issue: Do we make a strategic community investment to support the Green Era Energy and Urban Farming Campus “Green Era” and if so, at what level?

Recommendation: \$250,000 in 2021 to fund the Youth Corps Teen Education Program and support the predevelopment of the campus site build-out. This investment opportunity underpins bp’s business and supports C&A’s advocacy efforts – it also aligns with our new sustainability frame by advancing eight of bp’s aims and our diversity, equity and inclusion work.

This investment will be bp’s largest strategic investment in Chicagoland this year; requested funds are managed within the current 2021 budget allocated to Chicagoland.

Executive Summary

Chicago Deputy Mayor Mayekar and Black Chicago Tomorrow approached bp about investment opportunities in Green Era. bp’s trading & shipping organization is partnering with Green Era’s for-profit business to sell the renewable natural gas produced onsite via the anaerobic digester. To further our relationship with the organization – and engagement in a neighborhood ~15 miles from the Chicago office and the Whiting Refinery – we’re also recommending bp make a strategic community investment in the project.

Green Era, in partnership with the Urban Growers Collective, is developing a renewable energy facility, education center, and urban farming campus on a nine-acre remediated brownfield site in the Auburn Gresham neighborhood on Chicago’s South Side. The campus will include an anaerobic digester that recycles organic waste into renewable energy, supported by the partnership with bp’s trading & shipping business. The campus will also incorporate community green space, a hands-on educational facility and on-site urban farm. Public opening for the full campus is projected for spring 2023.

bp has been invited to invest in campus development and programming to turn Auburn Gresham into a national hub for the growing green economy with a focus on:

- *Providing economic opportunities:* Fostering a new renewable energy industry on Chicago’s South Side, bringing long-term, sustainable jobs and entrepreneurial opportunities.
- *Promoting environmental sustainability and addressing the lack of fresh food access:* Diverting 85,000 tons of food waste annually and producing 6,000 pounds of organic produce annually to help alleviate Chicago food deserts.
- *Creating educational opportunities:* Developing programming focused on careers in energy and STEM.
- *Addressing issues of environmental justice:* Remediating an environmentally contaminated brownfield site; planting productive landscapes that will enhance biodiversity

Auburn Gresham is a community targeted by Mayor Lightfoot’s INVEST South/West community development initiative. The initiative was established to fulfill a key campaign promise of revitalizing historically disinvested communities and is marshaling more than \$750 million in public and private investment to revitalize 12 commercial corridors across 10 South and West side neighborhoods. Work on the Green Era campus is kicking off in tandem with construction of a new Metra station in Auburn Gresham, and renovation of a vacant building set to become a healthy lifestyle hub.

Investment Recommendation

\$175,000 – Site predevelopment funds

This is a critical step in building the necessary ecosystem for on-going site development. bp has an opportunity to commit now, while plans are in development, to fund the creation of productive landscapes that will enhance the biodiversity of the natural spaces on campus, and support necessary environmental infrastructure, like stormwater management. We’ll work with the Green Era team to determine appropriate educational landmarks/branding opportunities in these areas. This work will be done by paid workforce training program participants from the local community and the Youth Corps Teen Education Program, creating a skilled workforce and talent pipeline. bp would leverage our relationship with current partners, like the Student Conservation Association, to explore tree planting and upkeep opportunities with bp-sponsored crews as well as with our employee volunteer network.

\$75,000 – Youth Corps Teen Education Program (operated by Urban Growers Collective)

This program will support our work to increase educational and community funding to organizations working to strengthen the STEM education pipeline in line with our diversity, equity and inclusion goals. Curriculum will provide high school participants with knowledge on food system and urban agriculture, renewable energy, anaerobic digester operations and careers in energy. bp would leverage our relationship with current education partners, including the National Energy Education Development Project to support curriculum development, and the bp STEM Ambassadors network for employee engagement opportunities.

Benefits

- Emphasize that bp is pivoting to an integrated energy company delivering solutions for customers.
 - Underpin the business investment our trading organization has made in this project and cross-promote other teams and businesses (e.g. Fulcrum, Finite, EV charging, Supplier Diversity, talent acquisition).
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- # **Redacted - First Amendment**
- Be recognized by officials as a civic leader by highlighting the company's commitment to environmental conservation and the creation of new jobs and educational opportunities
 - Support a high-profile initiative aligned with the Mayor's INVEST South/West initiative
 - Gov. Pritzker noted "This is a project that incorporates renewable energy, food production, availability of healthy foods, and climate-smart job training. It's exactly the kind of 21st century vision that deserves our investment."
 - Green Era has received public support from state officials, the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency, local Aldermen, and local community organizations. Many attended the ground-breaking ceremony as highlighted in this *Chicago Sun-Times* article, in which Janet Kong was quoted.
 - Demonstrate bp's commitment to improve people's lives and care for our planet as outlined in aim 11 (more clean energy), aim 12 (just transition), aim 13 (sustainable livelihoods), aim 14 (greater equity), aim 15 (enhance wellbeing), aim 16 (enhance biodiversity), aim 18 (championing nature-based solutions) and aim 19 (unlock circularity).
 - By providing critical, early-stage funding, establish a strong relationship with Green Era at the outset of the project, which provides an opportunity to cite the project's potential and, eventually, outcomes. This may also provide additional partnership and investment opportunities as Green Era pursues its long-term strategy of developing similar facilities across the state and country.
 - Supports BIPOC wealth building that aligns with bp's commitment to play a larger part in remedying racial inequality where we can influence it. Class B equity in the campus is owned by Urban Growers Collective, partner organizations and community members. Over time, the equity will create returns that support organizations' general operating costs. This model addresses inequity within communities in the short-term while also providing a model to transform philanthropy and create systemic change.
 - Chicagoland community members will look at the bp brand in a different way – one that gives them a chance to support renewable energy efforts, while expanding career opportunities, access to fresh food options and more.
 - Employee engagement opportunities through our STEM Ambassadors volunteer program.

Bottom line

This community investment opportunity underpins our company's business investment, supports our advocacy efforts, advances multiple bp aims, and aligns with our diversity, equity and inclusion work. A contribution to Green Era would reflect our efforts to be an energy company with purpose: one that is trusted by society, valued by shareholders and motivational to everyone who works at bp. As such, we recommend a \$250,000 investment this year.

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