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MAYOR LIGHTFOOT LAUNCHES EQUITY-FOCUSED LEAD SERVICE LINE REPLACEMENT PROGRAM

City to prioritize low-income residents in voluntary replacement program

CHICAGO - Mayor Lori E. Lightfoot today joined Department of Water Management Commissioner Randy Conner and Deputy Commissioner Andrea Cheng, Chicago Department of Public Health Commissioner Dr. Allison Arwady and Aldermen George Cardenas and Derrick Curtis to launch the City's long-awaited Lead Service Line Replacement Program. The voluntary program, designed to provide assistance to residents who wish to replace their lead service lines, will prioritize those who are low-income.

"Chicago's lead service lines are a legacy issue we need to start meaningfully confronting by moving in the right direction in a responsible way," said Mayor Lightfoot. "The new Lead Service Line Replacement Program stands as our equity-forward approach to providing residents the support they need, all while providing a foundation to continuously building on our commitment to addressing this important issue for the long term."

The City's drinking water is in compliance with all federal, state and industry standards for drinking water. As such, participation in any lead service line replacement program will be voluntary. Proposed changes to the Federal Lead and Copper Rule, which sets the benchmark for the amount of lead in drinking water, are expected to be released this year. Even under the proposed changes, Chicago will remain in compliance based on current lead-in-water testing results. There are approximately 380,000 lead service lines in Chicago, primarily in single-family and two-flat residences.

The City is offering two methods of City-assisted replacement: The Equity Lead Service Line Replacement Program for low-income residents and the Homeowner-Initiated Lead Service Line Replacement Program.

The Equity Lead Service Line Replacement Program will provide complete lead service line replacement for eligible low-income residents. Homeowners may



qualify for a free full lead service line replacement if they meet all of the following qualifications:

- Own and reside in their home;
- Have a household income below 80% of the area median income (\$72,800 for a family of 4); and,
- Have consistent lead concentrations above 15 ppb in their water, as tested by the Department of Water Management.

Under the Equity Lead Service Line Replacement Program, qualifying homeowners will have their lead service line replaced all the way from the water main into the home by contractors paid fully by the City. Per the Municipal Code, the service line beginning at the water main to the external shut-off valve, usually located under the parkway, is owned and maintained by the City. From the external shut-off valve into the home, the service line is the property and responsibility of homeowners. Single-family homes and two-flats will also receive a free water meter if there was not one already installed, to help residents save money on their water bills.

The Equity Lead Service Line Replacement Program will be paid for by up to \$15 million in Community Development Block Grant funds in 2021. There will be an ongoing application process that will allow a number of applicants to receive free replacements. This number will be capped based on a yearly basis, according to the available funding secured for the program each year going forward.

This program requires passage of an ordinance that will be introduced to the City Council for a vote in November. Pending passage, the program will begin accepting applications this fall. The application will be found at: <https://www.leadSAFEchicago.org/>.

The Homeowner-Initiated Lead Service Line Replacement Program is for homeowners that want to hire a contractor and remove the existing lead service line on their property. Under this program, the City will waive standard permit fees for the project, which could amount to a savings of over \$3,000. The City will connect the new service line to the water main and install a free water meter upon completion of the replacement.

To qualify for the fee waiver, it must be a standalone request - homeowners cannot be asking for it in conjunction with a home renovation or expansion that requires an upsizing of the water line. This program requires passage of an ordinance that will be introduced to the City Council for a vote in November with an effective date of January 1, 2021.



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“Creating options for lead service line replacement in Chicago represents another step towards removing lead as a potential risk to a healthy home,” Dr. Arwady. “However, we want to keep this issue in context. Lead-based paint remains the overwhelming cause of high blood lead levels in Chicago children.”

“It’s great the City is taking action, and we’ll learn a lot from these early steps. We look forward to our continued and sustained partnership with the City in addition to seeking State and Federal action and funding to ensure an equitable solution not just in Chicago but for the many affected communities across Illinois,” said Joshua Ellis of the Metropolitan Planning Council.

Laying the Foundation for Ongoing Lead Service Line Replacement, Chicago is exploring additional programs for those residents who wish to replace their service lines but do not qualify for the Homeowner-Initiated or Equity Programs, and to continue building on the long-term plan for the replacement of lead service lines across the City. The City also announced a project to be conducted in 2021 in order to better understand what it would take to perform lead service line replacement when the Department of Water Management replaces water mains.

“We have been replacing miles of aging water and sewer mains for years, some almost a century old. When we open the ground we frequently encounter unanticipated issues. This is why a project involving water main and lead service line replacement performed at the same time is so important,” said Commissioner Conner. “It is enormously helpful to understand what other cities have learned in their programs, but each city and its infrastructure are different.”

The City has commissioned a technical report to explore the full spectrum of funding and operational options for lead service line replacement. The report is expected to be released in the coming months. A working group comprised of stakeholders, regulators and aldermen will be convened to provide input and recommendations based on the report as the City continues to develop its long-term lead service line replacement plan.

Information on the Lead Service Line Replacement Program is available at: www.LeadSafeChicago.org.

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