

35 E. Wacker, Suite 1760
Chicago, IL 60601
312-554-0900
delta-institute.org
delta@delta-institute.org



CONTACTS:

Delta Institute
Sidney Freitag-Fey
312-554-0900 ext. 15
sfreitagfey@delta-institute.org

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: June 14, 2023

Commemorating freedom, assessing local environmental conditions; Residents and neighbors to come together in the Woodlawn neighborhood to assess local biodiversity as part of Juneteenth celebrations

Nonprofit partners Delta Institute, Blacks in Green, and Emerald South Economic Development Collaborative hosting community-centric events on Saturday, June 17th for Southside Chicagoans

CHICAGO, IL (June 17th) – Woodlawn/West Woodlawn residents are invited to come celebrate Juneteenth and participate in a “BioBlitz”—a community-led canvas of existing plants, birds, bees, butterflies, and wildlife at currently vacant parcels owned by the City of Chicago and Blacks in Green (BIG) that will have “green infrastructure” installed on them to capture rainwater, promote greenspace, and curb heat-island effect. Local nonprofits including [Delta Institute](#) (Delta), [BIG](#), and [Emerald South Economic Development Collaborative](#) (Emerald South) are hosting neighbors and friends at 6427 S St Lawrence Avenue, in the Woodlawn neighborhood of Chicago on Saturday, June 17th.

“Addressing environmental issues and needs in communities living with the continued impacts of legacy injustice requires deliberate, authentic engagement with neighbors and residents,” said Bill Schleizer, CEO of Delta. “Woodlawn’s residents are the experts of their neighborhood, and we’re grateful to the many citizen scientists who will participate in the BioBlitz.”

A full day of activities is planned. The BioBlitz will start at 10:00am, and will be conducted by Delta and Emerald South, who are partnering to install green infrastructure on vacant properties in Woodlawn, Washington Park, and the South Shore neighborhoods. Green Infrastructure uses natural design to collect excess rainwater to soak into the ground via native plants and pathways while providing additional habitat. Citizen scientists will use various tools and techniques to identify and document as many species as possible present in the area.

The BioBlitz is a part of both Emerald South’s [Terra Firma project](#) and BIG’s [Sustainable Square Mile pilot in West Woodlawn](#), and is within a block of the [Emmett and Mamie Till-Mobley House Museum](#) and other garden sites—including the Mamie Till-Mobley Forgiveness Garden—all of which are implemented and stewarded by BIG.

BIG is hosting a Juneteenth celebration of freedom and togetherness immediately following the BioBlitz for community members. The celebration will be held in the lot adjacent to the Till House Museum, and will feature live entertainment, food prepared on an induction stovetop with educational information about the benefits of induction cooking. BIG will also be activating

participation in their various Sustainable Square Mile activities, including a Sustainable Square Mile Membership Club. At this event, community members can learn all about the benefits of joining the club and its offerings.

“We want to enjoy this celebration of freedom and at the same time empower our community members to dig in. We hope that residents of all ages can be inspired by the idea that beautiful, functional gardens and landscapes can emerge from virtually lifeless surfaces through a holistic, green infrastructure approach. This BioBlitz and focus on biodiversity is a way that people can see and understand the potential we have to heal and regenerate a healthy, living ecology in our neighborhood,” said David Yocca, BIG’s Director of Green Infrastructure.

Delta, BIG, and Emerald South are collaborating on an array of community-based environmental and economic development projects that are addressing an array of environmental justice, redevelopment, and sustainability goals designed to improve numerous well-being indicators for Chicagoans. BIG, Emerald South, and Delta have identified several vacant sites in the Woodlawn community that will become part of the Sustainable Square Mile greenway, and numerous more sites in Washington Park and South Shore that will be part of a comprehensive green infrastructure implementation on the South Side.

“Terra Firma exemplifies our commitment to transforming communities through sustainable practices. By meticulously evaluating the impact of green infrastructure, we can unlock its true potential and create lasting positive change. Understanding the benefits and challenges associated with these initiatives allows us to optimize their effectiveness, ensuring a healthier environment, enhanced quality of life, and a more resilient future for all,” said Ghian Foreman, Emerald South President and CEO.”

These efforts are part of Delta’s [overall collaboration with community partners](#) to install and monitor the impacts and benefits of nature-based Green Infrastructure projects in the BIPOC-majority Chicago neighborhoods of Washington Park, Woodlawn, and South Shore in concert with Emerald South’s Terra Firma project to develop replicable resources for communities throughout the region. Our goal is to streamline green infrastructure implementation, maintenance, and assessment strategy so that green infrastructure is available to more communities—reducing flooding, improving health and well-being outcomes, and providing more access to natural spaces in the City for more Chicago residents.

###

Delta Institute is a Chicago-based nonprofit that collaborates with communities to solve complex environmental challenges throughout the Midwest. We address Midwestern environmental, economic, and climate challenges today, so that our home and region are more resilient, equitable, and innovative tomorrow. For more information: www.delta-institute.org.