

ILLINOIS ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

January 2023

Responsiveness Summary

Green Era 83rd Street LLC
650 West 83rd Street
Chicago, IL 60620

Bureau of Air
Source Identification No.: 031600TQW
Application No.: 21060012
Construction Permit

Bureau of Land
Log No.:2021-167
Permit No. 2021-167-DE
Application No.: 0316715228
Development Permit

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DECISION

On January 11, 2023, the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency (Illinois EPA) Bureaus of Air and Bureau of Land issued a construction permit and a development permit, respectively, to Green Era. The Bureau of Air construction permit establishes the emissions regulations, compliance, and monitoring of air pollutants from the facility. The Bureau of Land development permit approves the development of an organic non-hazardous waste compost facility. Copies of the documents can be obtained from the contact listed at the conclusion of this document. The permits and additional copies of this document can also be obtained from the Illinois EPA website <https://www2.illinois.gov/epa/public-notices/Pages/general-notices.aspx>

BACKGROUND

On November 5, 2021, the Illinois EPA, Bureau of Air received a construction permit application from Green Era, requesting a permit to construct a Liquid and Solid Food Waste Recycling Facility. The proposed facility will produce a pipeline quality biomethane gas from liquid and solid food wastes to be injected into natural gas interstate pipeline by use of anaerobic digesters and biogas treatment system. The emission units of the facility would be biomass equalization tank, anaerobic digester tank, biogas handling and processing system, process building controlled by an ionizer canon and carbon guard for odor control and various ancillary and support operations.

The construction permit issued for the facility identifies the applicable rules governing emissions from the plant and establishes enforceable limitations on its emissions. The construction permit also establishes appropriate compliance procedures, including requirements for emissions testing, continuous emission monitoring, recordkeeping, and reporting. Green Era will be required to carry out these procedures on an ongoing basis to demonstrate that the plant is operating within the limitations established by the construction permit and that emissions are being properly controlled.

On May 6, 2021, the Illinois EPA, Bureau of Land received a development permit application from Green Era, requesting a permit to develop an organic non-hazardous waste compost facility. This facility will consist of a 35,000 square foot Processing Building, a 5,600 square foot building for temporary storage of General Use Compost and wood chips (referred to as Pole Barn), four (4) hoop houses for indoor farming operations, a 1.64-million-gallon digester tank, a 320,000 -gallon equalization tank, biogas equipment, a flare, a thermal oxidizer and associated piping and valves. Organic non-hazardous waste received at this facility will be composted via a conventional wet anaerobic digestion system.

COMMENT PERIOD AND PUBLIC HEARING

The Illinois EPA Bureau of Air evaluates applications and issues permits for sources of emissions. An air permit application must appropriately address compliance with applicable air pollution control laws and regulations before a permit can be issued. Following its initial review of Green Era's application, the Illinois EPA Bureau of Air made a preliminary determination that the application met the standards for issuance of a construction permit and prepared a draft permit for public review and comment.

The Illinois EPA Bureau of Land evaluates applications and issues permits for waste handling, storage, and disposal facilities. A land development permit application must appropriately show that the proposed project will comply with applicable pollution control laws and regulations before a permit can be issued. Following its initial review of Green Era's application, the Illinois EPA Bureau of Land made a preliminary determination that the application met the standards for issuance of a development permit and prepared a draft permit for public review and comment.

The public comment period began with the publication of a notice on October 4, 2022. The Illinois EPA Office of Community Relations held a virtual (online) public meeting on November 1, 2022, to explain the procedures for the public hearing and describe how to make effective public comments during the comment period. A public hearing was held on November 17, 2022, at the Auburn Gresham Healthy Lifestyle Hub in Chicago to receive oral comments and answer questions regarding the application and draft construction permit. The comment period closed on December 19, 2022.

AVAILABILITY OF DOCUMENTS

The permits issued to Green Era and this responsiveness summary are available on the Illinois Permit Database at <https://www2.illinois.gov/epa/public-notices/Pages/general-notices.aspx> Copies of these documents may also be obtained by contacting the Illinois EPA at the telephone numbers listed at the conclusion of this document.

COMMENTS AND QUESTIONS WITH RESPONSES BY THE ILLINOIS EPA

Question

We want to know when the permit's going to be ready and so we can get it going and available for the people. So, the question, I guess is when can we expect that?

Response

The Agency must review and respond to all significant comments received during the comment period. The comment period closed on 19th of December. This document is responsive to the comments received. On January 11, 2023, the Illinois EPA BOA issued a construction permit for

the facility. On January 11, 2023, the Illinois EPA BOL issued a development permit for the facility.

COMMENTS SUPPORTING THE PROPOSED PROJECT

A number of oral comments were made at the public hearing supporting the issuance of an air pollution control permit and land development permit for the proposed project, as summarized below. These comments are usually not germane to Agency determinations concerning the permits. Responses to these comments are not provided.

Since we began this process five years ago, there have been 30 plus meetings in our community-centered design process. We have collected and listened to feedback for a large-scale planning effort, engaging more than 1,500 local stakeholders, including strong partnerships with local schools committed to STEM education, and partnering with other community leaders on complementary health-related developments such as the Greater Auburn-Gresham Development Corps' Healthy Lifestyle Hub. The Green Era Renewable Energy and Urban Agricultural Campus is transforming nine acres of contaminated brownfield into a vibrant hub for organics recycling, green energy, living wage jobs, fresh produce, small business incubation, educational programming, and community green space. The campus will infuse the neighborhood with critical resources to promote an equitable recovery of health and economy and help us weather future crises. It will allow Chicago to build a secure urban food shed to feed the city.

As a member of this community for the last 28 years, one thing that I do see is that we really do need an economic revitalization, not just that, but an area for us to access fresh produce. The only grocery store we have within the local community is our local Aldi and Walmart. Outside of that, where people can get fresh produce, fresh food, anywhere is their local gas station or their local liquor store, where those produces are pretty much spoiled, have gray meats, bugs in your food, things of that nature, things that you wouldn't see in any other side of the city but the South and West Sides here. And so, when we talk about how we can bring a revitalization of community, and not just a community, but in an area when the family's net worth is at a negative \$8, right? Green Era is not just a digester. It's a way for people to get that prosperity, a way for them to get the fresh produce that any other area in the Chicagoland you know, prefecture can access. You don't see this type of disparity on the North Side. You don't see these types of disparities in the north suburbs. You only see these types of disparities in what we like to call the landfill ring, landfill circles. It's only when you see areas of economic distress when you see these types of resources being taken away from constantly. And for the first time in my 28 years here in the South Side of Chicago, in the Englewood area and the Auburn Gresham area, we have something beneficial here.

I'm here to express my support for the Green Era and Urban Farming Campus for three reasons. One, the expertise and commitment of this team whose work I'm familiar with for the past 2 years. They've been very intentional about how they've engaged the community, how they've listened to the community, and I just find their work to be extremely commendable. Secondly,

the local jobs that it will help to bring to the Auburn Gresham community. This is a community that's in need of jobs, and to have an opportunity to have the campus support additional jobs, local jobs, I think is important. lastly, the real-life application that students that live the students and youth that live in the Auburn Gresham community will get to experience at the digester, for them to be able to see live STEM education, to learn more about sustainable and renewable energy is very important.

Greater Auburn-Gresham Development Corporation, in partnership with Green Era Development, were able to bring back to life two long-vacant, underutilized assets; this 60,000-square-foot, four-story asset and a nine-acre, deplorable brownfield site at 650 West 83rd Street. We are now being able to bring to life that site with a renewable energy and urban farming campus, something that is very unusual for communities like Auburn Gresham and Englewood and West Chatham and Washington Heights. Not only are we bringing that back to life, but we are revitalizing opportunities economic development opportunities. But for the fact that Green Era is developing this nine-acre site, it would sit there as it has sat there for far too long.

We see this as a wealth generator, job generator for our community. Green Era I mean, it sounds maybe not so impactful, but if you drove around that site before it was remediated, because I think some of you have been to the campus after remediation, it was a dump. it is a beautiful, clean site that we have engineered and made a promise to ourselves to make this work with the right technology. The center is designed to bring jobs, some engineering jobs, some laborers, some farmers, but a really high-tech campus that I think everybody in the community is proud of. So, when you think about the African roots in African American communities, we have more green gardens and farms and people that are just waiting. It's going to be phenomenal. I can't wait. I'm looking for the permit to come.

Climate change is real. It's here now, and I know that you all live and breathe that. But particularly for communities of color, they're the first to be impacted by it. Divestment has been impacting Auburn Gresham for the last 40 years. For us to be able to really impact this neighborhood, we really need to be able to invest now in green technology to help further and create a healthier environment for this neighborhood. We know that racism is structural and our response to that also must be structural. We know that the time really is now to invest in our local food community. And so, I think, you know, having a resource like Green Era is going to be just a huge investment for Chicago to be able to really create security across the board, both environmental but also food and just economic, to be able to just make a healthier Chicago. For phase two, we're really excited to be able to offer 30 jobs for teens on-site. We're also really excited to offer over 18,000 square feet of just green space for folks to be able to come, do, and walk in the community.

I'm just inspired by everybody that has spoken so far about bringing this new revitalization to the community. as a farmer and a cook with very close ties with Urban Growers Collective, I can definitely vouch from a very boots-on-the-ground level with Fresh Moves distributing that produce that's grown in South Chicago that I actually was growing as an apprentice is really

impacting the community. I grew up on the West Side. I'm traveling all the way over here to get the resources. We really need it. And I want to be part of the inspiration for other youth to get involved in it and just spread it around.

We're a public affairs consultancy, help organizations navigate the intersection of food, farming, and regional economies. I've been watching this with real live excitement for at least a couple of years. I look at what this project represents and think of it almost as an anchor tenant of the shopping mall of a climate economy and a community-driven agrifood nutrition and conservation economy. I am really pleased to hear this and have a chance to come and see for myself what a great investment this represents, not only for Chicago, the South Side of Chicago, and the region, but I think it's going to be a message for the country, and Illinois in a leadership role.

The Illinois Environmental Council Program is a nonprofit that represents over 100 different environmental organizations. Each year, Chicago generates about 522,000 tons of organic waste. The Green Era project is an opportunity to convert that waste into useful energy and, at the same time, provide clean energy jobs to a community in a city that needs more and better-quality employment. Green Era is a blueprint for what can be done, not only in Auburn Gresham, what can be done in Chicago, Illinois, and the nation to combat climate change with jobs in innovation.

Green Era represents a new path forward. Once operational, it will demonstrate that food, nutrition, and agricultural enterprise are the building block for the next generation of community development. Its success will help shift the public narrative from, how do we grow as a region to how do we live. Green Era can be a building block for Illinois' new community-based agri-food, nutrition, and conservation economy. The three-county South Metro region is well-positioned to inform the design of a state funding program supporting community-driven projects that improve public health, soil health, water quality and local economies from Waukegan to Cairo.

FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Questions about the public comment period and permit decision should be directed to:

Sabrina Bailey, Community Relations Coordinator
Illinois Environmental Protection Agency
Office of Community Relations
1021 North Grand Avenue, East
P.O. Box 19506
Springfield, Illinois 62794-9506
(847) -294-4394
Sabrina.bailey@illinois.gov