

# SUSTAINABLE FACILITIES MENTOR

## CASE STUDY: CYC—SIDNEY EPSTEIN



PROGRAM STAGE:  
**GREEN TEAM**

NEIGHBORHOOD:  
**NORTH LAWDALE**

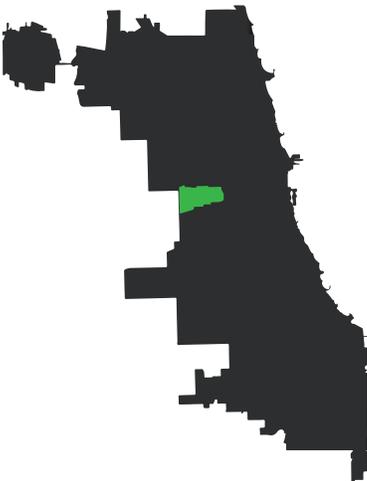
BUILDING TYPE:  
**COMMUNITY CENTER**

BUILDING AGE:  
**100+ YEARS**

# OF YOUTH INVOLVED: **20**

ORGANIZATIONAL CONTACT:  
**CLARENCE HOGAN, CENTER  
DIRECTOR CYC-SIDNEY EPSTEIN**

MENTOR:  
**PRACHI SHARMA, ILLINOIS  
GREEN VOLUNTEER**



### THE PARTNERSHIP

Illinois Green and the Chicago Youth Center (CYC) started collaborating on sustainability through the Sustainability Day Camp in 2018 and 2019 when the Auxiliary Board engaged with CYC youth at the Bronzeville location about different sustainability topics. In 2020, the Auxiliary Board switched locations and connected with the Sidney Epstein Center in North Lawndale, sharing virtual activities for students during the pandemic. This established relationship paved the way for volunteer Prachi Sharma and Clarence Hogan, the CYC-Sidney Epstein director, to collaborate on the Sustainable Facilities Mentor Program.

### WHY SUSTAINABILITY?

As a youth focused organization that provides after school and summer activities for students, the CYC sees youth as ambassadors of the skills they learn. Because of this, Clarence and his staff, as sustainability advocates, recognized the opportunity to expand sustainability throughout the CYC and the North Lawndale community by incorporating the Sustainable Facilities Mentor Program with youth programming. The goal was to create youth sustainability ambassadors while also using Prachi's knowledge of CYC's facility to identify sustainability improvement opportunities.

### GREEN TEAM OVERVIEW

Every month, Prachi, Clarence, and two other staff members from the CYC would meet over Zoom. During these meetings, Prachi would review a worksheet to gather data and understand practices about the facilities operations focusing

on a different topic each month - energy, water, waste, and air quality. After the meetings, Prachi provided recommendations for improving sustainability in the CYC.

The green team staff then involved the youth to explore Prachi's recommendations. The CYC's programs for youth and teens provide opportunities to develop skills through different group activities. Through the CYC's participation in the Sustainable Facilities Mentor program, the opportunity to create a sustainability-focused group, the Green Team, became very attractive and feasible.

**“ I already had a good introduction to the CYC from the Sustainability Day Camp before the pandemic... [Now with the SFM program] it's been a great journey and I am quite happy with what has been happening with the CYC [regarding sustainability.] ”**



**PRACHI SHARMA**  
ILLINOIS GREEN VOLUNTEER

The inaugural Green Team engaged about 20 youth from 5 to 12 years of age in sustainable operations through different sustainability activities. The activities followed a monthly topic: energy in January, water in February, waste in March, and air in April (see the schedule with the respective activities outlined on the graphic). Every Wednesday, activities were planned focusing on developing sustainable behavior while also fostering a conversation about the importance of sustainability and conservation. The youth also received kits to implement sustainable practices in their own homes.



## FUTURE PLANS

Following the success of the Green Team at CYC-Sidney Epstein, other CYCs have expressed interest in developing a green team and improving sustainability in their facilities and communities.

The CYC-Sidney Epstein's next step is to apply for grants and find other funding to implement some of the higher level sustainability challenges outlined in the box to the right. This could include utility incentives, or the Neighborhood Power Project, which provides a holistic building performance assessment as well as funding to implement improvements.

## GREEN TEAM TOPICS & SCHEDULE



### Energy (January)

After learning about energy efficiency, kids marked light switches, created reminders, and developed an accountability system to turn off unused lights.



### Water (February)

Kids learned about water pollution and conservation. With the CYC staff, they put this into practice by using reusable water bottles, rain barrels, and new water spigots.



### Waste (March)

Kids began to use recycling bins while also practicing food waste reduction with take home kits of DIY orange diffusers.



### Air (April)

Kids adopted plants and performed garden clean ups to understand the importance of plants and air quality. They also celebrated earth day with contests and posters.

## BEYOND THE GREEN TEAM

In addition to activities with the youth, the CYC, Prachi and Clarence identified and began to tackle 3 bigger sustainability challenges:

1. Ensure that the waste disposal company is recycling the CYC's separated recyclable waste.
2. Consider solutions for food waste given the limitations from the food service provider.
3. Reduce energy consumption in the building through being more efficient with lights and equipment.

“ If we are going to teach kids about sustainability, we too need to make changes at a macro level... If that means replacing lights or talking to our food and trash vendors about being more sustainable, then we ought to do that. ”



**CLARENCE HOGAN**  
CENTER DIRECTOR CYC-SIDNEY EPSTEIN

## ABOUT THE SUSTAINABLE FACILITIES MENTOR PROGRAM

**ILLINOIS  
GREEN**



A USGBC COMMUNITY

The Sustainable Facilities Mentor Program is for Illinois Green members and volunteers who would like to gain skills in sustainable operations, and use that knowledge to help buildings in their community meet sustainability goals.

The program includes eight training workshops, covering topics from water, waste, and air quality walkthroughs to discussing sustainable operations strategies. Following training completion, mentors support a building in the community to meet their goals.