



# TOM 2010

**TOM TRESSER FOR COOK  
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## SEVEN PROGRAMS TO TRANSFORM COOK COUNTY

### IDEA #1 – URBAN AGRICULTURE TO TRANSFORM VACANT LOTS

There are thousands of vacant lots in the city of Chicago and across the county. The county owns land around its various facilities and it also manages the Forest Preserve.

There is a major problem across the county with people having access to fresh food that is affordable and convenient to get to. We also have an epidemic of obesity, high blood pressure and other incidents of poor health.

So I propose the county launch a major initiative to transform vacant lots into plots that produce fresh vegetables, fruit and even honey via beekeeping!

We would start with a sizeable plot adjacent to Stroger Hospital and make it a model or demonstration project – complete with solar panels for electricity, a farm stand for sales and a classroom for teaching and lectures.

We would work with the established urban agriculture experts to set up and run this project. We would ask local universities to adopt this project and help design and supply volunteers to document the project. We would make sure that all work around the actual growing and harvesting of food was paid at a living wage with benefits. We would work with youth service programs and ex-offender programs to see how we can get people to work on these plots.

I would direct the county to purchase produce from this program to supply the hospital, jail and county office buildings. As the program expands, we would seek customers from local schools, universities and corporate cafeterias.

At first we would use the county's own land to start this project. I would encourage the other municipalities across the county to start similar programs. I would establish an Office of Innovation (to be explained in an upcoming newsletter) to coordinate these programs and seek support funding from the federal government and private foundations.

But if this program takes off like I think it would, I can see establishing incentives to encourage owners of land across the county to convert their vacant plots into mini-farms. Perhaps owners could be forgiven some of their property taxes in return for producing food and entering into a county-wide system of local growers.

Every aspect of this program will be documented and put on line and we will have regular reports to the community as to the progress, expenses, revenues and other benefits the program produces. We will evaluate this program at the end of the first year to see if it has lived up to expectations. Like all new and innovative ideas, this program will be the result of collaboration, learning and some trial-and-error.

But there are many local and national examples that we will be able to learn from as we plan and launch this program.

By growing and buying locally we turn ugly and blighted vacant land into spots of beauty and bounty. We put people to work. We reduce carbon emissions and purchase of oil as we don't have to transport food from far away places.

This program connects to many parts of county life. We can put people to work. We can transform vacant land into productive land. We can work with design schools, programs in the retail and food service industries that will build upon our agriculture project.

I welcome your comments and suggestions on my campaign web site.  
[<http://www.tom2010.us/seven-ideas>]

Web sites on urban agriculture:

<http://growingpower.org> – Growing Power, a nationally known nonprofit

<http://www.ruaf.org> – Resources for urban agriculture

<http://auachicago.wordpress.com> – Chicago Advocates for Urban Agriculture

**IDEA #2 – STORE FRONT CLINICS**

Currently Cook County ranks 81 out of Illinois' 102 counties in terms of health care delivery. This is according to the County health Rankings published by The University  
[<http://www.countyhealthrankings.org/illinois/cook>] of Wisconsin's Population Health Institute.

This survey looks at measures such as premature death, low birthweight, adult obesity, uninsured adults, preventable hospital stays, violent crime rate, air pollution and access to health foods. We come out close to the bottom.

27% of all adults in Illinois are obese. 35% of blacks and 25% of whites are obese.

The people of Cook County are not healthy.

The access to health care and the poor outcomes associated with lack of health care hits our communities differently. If you live in a poor community or a community of color, you are likely to be unhealthier than if you live in a community of wealth or a white community.

Dr. Steven Whitman, [<http://www.suhichicago.org/about-suhi/staff/steven-whitman>] the Director of the Mt. Sinai Urban Health Institute, has written, "The battle against racial disparities in health is: (a) touted widely, (b) long overdue; and (c) losing ground and predisposed to continue doing so by social forces that are propelling society in the wrong direction."  
[<http://www.suhichicago.org/files/publications/AA.pdf>]

I propose to take Cook County in the RIGHT direction in eliminating these health care disparities.

We will do this by working with the County Health System to establish a series of store front mini-clinics staffed by nurse-practitioners. Sometimes called "advanced practice nurses" these health care professionals can provide a wide range of basic health care services, including:

- Taking medical histories and performing physical exams
- Diagnose and treat acute and chronic problems
- Provide routine health care, wellness and disease prevention
- Order and interpret lab tests, X-rays and other diagnostic tests

- Prescribe medications and treatments
- and much more [<http://www.isapn.org/?page=WhatisanAPN>]

Advanced practice nurses can do almost everything doctors can do – especially in the role of preventative and primary care. And the savings are considerable.

Remember, when people don't have access to preventative and primary care and they get sick or injured they head to the emergency room and that costs a bundle.

Let's put these clinics in the communities with the greatest need and whose residents are not being adequately served by our public health programs. A study in the journal "Nursing Economics" (March/April 2008) looked at this model and concluded "Nurse-managed clinics can serve as an important safety net in the health care delivery system by offering needed health services to the poor and underinsured populations." [<http://www.nursingeconomics.net>]

This sort of health care is already happening across the country – just take a look at the MinuteClinics and similar programs popping up at your local chain drug store. [<http://www.minuteclinic.com>]

We are going to need new thinking to transform health care delivery in Cook County. We need to bring our health care metrics up from 81 to #1! This will save lives, improve the quality of life for our neighbors AND save money over the long term.

Web sites on nurse-managed clinics:

- Article on cost and quality of nurse-managed clinics from "Nursing Economics" - <https://www.nursingeconomics.net/ce/2010/article26075083.pdf>
- Illinois Society for Advanced Practice Nursing – <http://www.isapn.org>
- American Academy of Nurse Practitioners - <http://www.aanp.org>

**IDEA #3 – INNOVATION & THE ARTS**

I've spent decades in the arts and culture communities in Chicago. I was a co-founder of a small classical theater company in 1981 and grew it from nothing to a budget of \$150,000 in three years. Later I was the managing director of Chicago's largest non-Equity theater. I have made a study of how the arts and creativity transforms lives, builds communities and creates economic value.

Creativity is a powerful and often under-valued natural resource for a community and a region. We all have it and creativity powers not just vast portions of our economy but it nourishes the soul and brings us all together.

The arts, culture and creative industries are big business in Illinois and Cook County. Close to two million people in Illinois make their living in the creative industries. That's about 32% of the full time workforce. About the same percentage is true for the Chicago metropolitan area.

Being creative, innovative and being a problem solver are qualities NOT just for artists or scientists – but are skills EVERYONE needs to succeed in an economy driven by ideas, hyper-competition and new discoveries. Skills learned through creative activities – such as problem-solving, collaboration and empathy are MUST HAVES for the modern work place where much of the work is done in high-performance teams. Our schools need to re-tool their programs to encourage, nourish and celebrate creativity in our children. Our workers need to be smart, creative and highly literate.

In order to succeed in the modern economy, Illinois – and Cook County – must lift creativity to a MUST HAVE priority.

I've seen many examples – some of which I organized myself for Pegasus Players, Peoples Housing and the Chicago Park District – where the arts bring people together, create safe places for collaboration and celebration, spark effective training programs, bring streets back to life and light up lives.

I will bring this spirit of creativity and innovation to Cook County.

- I will call for the establishment of a Cook County Arts Council to give the arts a voice and champion county-wide.
- I will work with the arts and cultural leaders of the county to create a cultural plan to lift up the arts and bring cultural programming to areas of the county that currently lack cultural resources.
- I will work with business leaders and the mayors of the municipalities of the county to encourage them to add the arts and culture to their civic planning and improvement agendas.
- I will advocate for literacy programs, increased support to local libraries and expanded English As Second Language teaching programs.
- I will appoint artists and cultural workers to commissions, boards and other offices in order to receive the benefits of creative thinking and unique perspectives.
- I will work with the deans of local business schools and major cultural institutions to establish training programs that prepare workers for success in the creative industries.
- I will establish an Office of Innovation inside the President's Office to look at how the county can bring new services to the people of Cook County and how to pay for them.

Cook County has not been known for being a hot bed of innovation and a home for the arts and creative industries. This will change if I become the next President of the Cook County Board. Cook County will practice innovation in order to deliver excellent and needed services. But it will also seek, nourish, celebrate and accelerate the creativity within its borders in order to build communities and save lives.

Web sites on the arts and innovation:

- Arts Alliance Illinois - <http://www.artsalliance.org>
- National Council on Competitiveness - <http://www.compete.org/about-us/initiatives>
- "Beyond Productivity: Information, Technology, Innovation & Creativity" – The National Academies Press - [http://www.nap.edu/catalog.php?record\\_id=10671](http://www.nap.edu/catalog.php?record_id=10671)



COOK COUNTY



#### IDEA #4 – GREENING COOK COUNTY

Let's make Cook County the showcase for green government and environmental stewardship.

Let's reduce the carbon footprint of the government to as close to zero as possible.

Let's create a comprehensive recycling program for the entire county. We can look to the City of Seattle to see how a large-scale program was introduced and what amazing impact it has had.

[<http://www.innovations.harvard.edu/awards.html?id=3506>] We need to go further. Let's put gardens on our county building rooftops. Let's install solar arrays and re-use rain water for those gardens. Let's re-fit our fleet to run on bio-fuels.

Let's plan together across the county, with all the villages and municipalities, to look at our shared environment and issue a regional assessment of our water, land and air quality.

Let's implement the recommendations of the Chicago Agency for Metropolitan Planning's (CMAP) "Go To 2040" Report [<http://www.goto2040.org>] which calls for improved mass transit, expanded green space, innovative urban agriculture programs to transform vacant land into food production and investing in our research and innovation capacities.

I see a number of major opportunities for the county.

First, I'd like to implement an urban agriculture initiative. That was described in the Idea #1 email.

Second, let's get serious about installing as many solar arrays for our homes and businesses as possible. Let Cook County take the lead here by working with local suppliers to set up model installations on highly visible county buildings. Let's work with local community colleges to start a training program that will turn out qualified technicians who can perform energy audits, install the solar panels and perform other jobs related to the green economy.

I would propose a pilot project to give home and business owners a reduction of their property taxes in return for installing and maintaining approved solar panel setups. New Jersey has an excellent system that could show us one way to do this. [<http://solarpowerrocks.com/new-jersey>]

We need to improve our mass transit system significantly. The folks at CMAP estimate the cost of congestion in the metro region is \$7.3 billion every year. They estimate the annual average cost of car commuting is \$12,500 while the annual average cost of transit commuting is \$1,000. I will call on our regional and local transit agencies to merge and plan for service expansion. We will need to think strategically and creatively about funding service improvements and the CMAP plan offers a number of sound options.

I pledge to bring a spirit of sustainability, stewardship and innovation to Cook County. We need to think green and be green as a matter of taking care of our planet and building the next economy.



COOK COUNTY



## **IDEA #5 – REFORMING THE JUVENILE JUSTICE SYSTEM**

We arrest and jail far too many kids in Illinois and Cook County. About 16,000 17-year-olds enter the adult system in Illinois every year. In 2007 some 4,473 kids cycled through the Cook County Juvenile Detention Center.

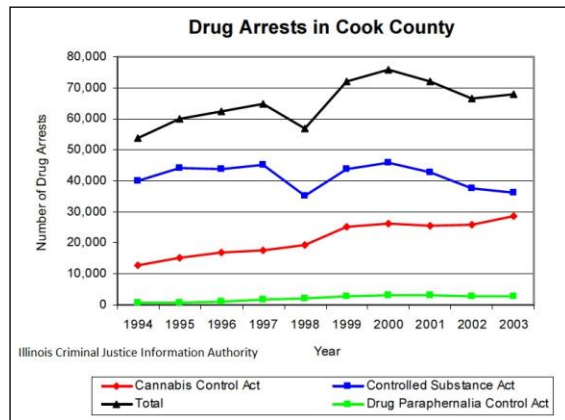
71% of all arrests of juveniles are for non-violent crimes. Youth of color are about one-third of the youth population but make up 90% of the young people who are put into the adult system.



Something is wrong with this picture.

It costs the Illinois taxpayers about \$85,000 annually to keep a kid in jail.

Look at this graph:



According to the civic planning organization Metropolis 2020, imprisoning people convicted of non-violent drug offenses costs Illinois taxpayers an estimated \$240 million a year.

If I am elected Cook County Board President I will move to change this picture.

First, I will advocate for the decriminalization of marijuana and for the release from detention any juvenile being held for non-violent drug-related offenses.

Most importantly, I will move to implement a comprehensive program of diversion programs to keep kids who get into trouble OUT OF PRISON. We need to have excellent drug rehab programs to get kids with substance abuse problems clean and sober. We need after school programs to keep kids out of trouble.

We need a range of community-based solutions to use for kids if they do enter the justice system. These community-based solutions include mentoring, counseling, group homes and foster care. These community-anchored programs cost, on average, \$10,000 per kid annually. This is a huge savings over incarceration and is far more likely to result in that youth becoming a tax payer and not a tax consumer.

I would advocate for Cook County's juvenile justice system adopting what has been labeled the "Missouri Model" for caring for young people who get in trouble. [<http://www.dss.mo.gov/dys>]

Here's what one nationally known child welfare expert said about this model:

"The state of Missouri has created a juvenile justice system that has proved so successful over the last 30 years it's known as the "Missouri Miracle." A number of practices combine to make Missouri's system unique: It's primarily made up of small facilities, generally designed for between ten and 30 youths, located at sites throughout the state that keep young people close to their own homes. These facilities don't look like jails with traditional cells; there are only eight isolation rooms in the entire state, which are seldom used and only for emergency situations. They feature a highly trained and educated staff working in teams with small groups of youths. Youths are treated with respect and dignity, and instead of more traditional correctional approaches, the system uses a rehabilitative and therapeutic model that works towards teaching the young people to make positive, lasting changes in their behavior. The result has been some of the best outcomes in the nation: fewer than 8 percent of the youths in the Missouri system return again after their release, and fewer than 8 percent go on to adult prison. One-third of the youths return to their communities with a high school diploma or GED, and another 50 percent successfully return to school." [[http://www.huffingtonpost.com/marian-wright-edelman/juvenile-justice-reform-m\\_b\\_498976.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/marian-wright-edelman/juvenile-justice-reform-m_b_498976.html)]

The modern juvenile justice system was created here in Cook County in 1899, led by social activist Jane Addams. What was once a model for the world has deteriorated into a scandal-ridden and over-crowded embarrassment. The county was sued by the Illinois ACLU over the horrible conditions in the juvenile jail and, as a result, the operation of the system was handed over to an administrator who reports to a federal judge.

We need to reclaim the reform and champion of justice banner that was carried by Jane Addams and her allies from so long ago.

If I am the next President of the Cook County Board we will see that spirit return to our juvenile justice system.

Web resources on juvenile justice:

- Chicago Public Radio's series on juvenile justice in Illinois - <http://insideandout.chicagopublicradio.org>
- Juvenile Justice Initiative – <http://www.jjustice.org>
- Campaign for Youth Justice - <http://www.campaignforyouthjustice.org>

**IDEA #6 – REFORM, SERVICE, SAVINGS**



COOK COUNTY



Everyone claims to be a reformer in this race. Everyone claims to be a tough independent willing to take on the Machine. I'd like to remind you that I'm the one candidate running anywhere in Illinois who has so successfully challenged the Democratic Machine for so long and on so many vital issues.

In the mid-1990's I was part of a state-wide coalition that stopped the expansion of casino gambling into Cook County. This was pushed by Mayor Daley and had the support of every politician in the city.

More recently I was the co-leader of No Games Chicago, an all-volunteer group of concerned citizens that fought the bid for the 2106 Olympics when no one else would.

I estimate that because we did not get the Summer Olympics every tax payer in Cook County will save about \$1,000 in higher property taxes that would've resulted from the massive cost overruns that come with the modern Olympics. How bad can it get? Ask the poor tax payers in Vancouver where the much smaller Winter games stuck them with a \$1.5 BILLION debt. Or ask the shell shocked tax payers of London where the 2012 games are now \$12 BILLION over budget.

That being said, if elected, I pledge to bring a fresh start for Cook County featuring massive reform, increased excellence in all services and a savings for each and every tax payer.

I am dedicated to service. I follow a model of leadership called Servant-Leadership which basically says one seeks to lead in order to serve. It may sound odd to want to serve as a way of leading but anyone who knows a great teacher or doctor or nonprofit leader or religious steward will know what this spirit is all about. [<http://www.greenleaf.org>]

I will bring this model of service to the entire Cook County work force. We will be dedicated to delivering excellent service to the people of Cook County.

Along with the call to service, and the revamping of our hiring, training and compensation plans to reflect this dedication, will come some very serious accounting.

I intend to cut the workforce by at least ten percent. I will institute a forensic audit on all aspects of the county's finances as well as every contract. We simply can not take anything for granted. The corruption and incompetence has been so widespread for so long, we simply don't trust much of anything the county has published recently.

We will conduct a desk audit of all employees. We'll start with the people who report to the President's Office. I will certainly bring in a team for the most pressing managerial positions but I don't want a mass exodus. We will review all positions to see if (1) the job is needed and aligns with some strategic plan for the county, (2) the person is qualified for the job, and (3) the person is actually present and working.

We will then review all middle-management positions with the same criteria. Finally, we will review all line personnel. We will review all the Shakman Decree settlements and look at the employees whose hiring or promotion triggered a settlement. I will want to know why those bad hires or bad promotes are still on the county payroll.

My message to Cook County employees is this. If you have received your job properly and if you are qualified for your job and if you're actually performing your job, then you have nothing to worry about from a Tresser administration. But if this is NOT the case and we find you – then we will fire you and prosecute you for theft.

I will also fight to eliminate Tax Increment Financing (TIFs) from the county. This is not something the Board President can make happen on their own. I would embark on a grassroots education campaign to every city, town and village in the county. I will ask the people of Cook County to demand to their local elected officials to sunset existing TIFs and not to start any new ones.

In 2008 some 420 TIF districts hijacked some \$875 million of our property taxes county wide AWAY from the local units of government that rely on them for their operations. This included \$495 million from the City of Chicago. If you live in a neighborhood that is in a TIF district then YOUR property tax bill is lying to you unless it shows the amount of money being diverted from your schools, your parks, your police, your libraries, etc.

I regard TIFs as a massive fraud on the taxpayer and the source of the biggest slush funds the Democratic Machine operates. Learn more about TIFs and TIF abuse at this web site I have set up. [<http://chicagoteaparty.pbworks.com/ABOLISH-TIFS!>] You can also sign an online petition calling for the abolition of TIFs in Cook County. [<http://www.gopetition.com/petition/38926.html>]

In addition, there are about \$50 million in easily achieved savings from eliminating duplication of county departments. There is another \$200 million in new revenues to be garnered by implementing modern billing systems in the hospital system.

These reforms will conservatively CUT YOUR PROPERTY TAXES BY TEN PERCENT.

My decades of experience in the nonprofit sector has made me a frugal administrator – able to innovate and implement new programs effectively and efficiently. I have extensive experience in creating non-traditional collaborations between unlikely allies to solve problems and get things done. This background makes me an ideal candidate for the position of President of Cook County.

If the people of Cook County place their trust in me, I will not disappoint them. I promise to launch a fresh start for Cook County – one that will be remembered for a new day of reform, excellence and service.

## **IDEA #7 – CONNECTING THE DOTS, MAKING THE CASE FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT**

I've laid out a plan for bringing excellence, reform, innovation and savings to the tax payers of Cook County.



In the past six emails and prior communications I've told you that I have the courage to take on the Democratic Machine, the passion to serve and in the intellect to innovate.

I believe my non-traditional background in community development, nonprofit leadership, grassroots organizing and cultural programming gives me a set of skills that will allow me to bring people together to solve tough problems AND save money at the same time.

I will transform "Cook County" into the greenest, cleanest, leanest and healthiest county in America.

But there is one more way that I see to transform Cook County.

I'd like to make Cook County a national leader in advocating for changing the way our federal government spends our money.

Here's a little known deficit that is at the heart of many of our state's government-related problems.

For every dollar we send to Washington in form of taxes, Illinois gets .78 back.



In 2005 Illinois sent \$99,776,000,000 to Washington and we got \$80.778,000 back. That was a net loss of \$18,998,000,000! That's almost \$19 BILLION lost in one year!  
[<http://www.nemw.org/index.php/Illinois>]

The reason is simple. We don't have extensive military bases and defense-related manufacturing in Illinois.

USA Today reports:

"Rapidly rising pay and benefits in the armed forces have lifted many military towns into the ranks of the nation's most affluent communities, a USA TODAY analysis finds. The hometown of the Marines' Camp Lejeune — Jacksonville, N.C. — soared to the nation's 32nd-highest income per person in 2009 among the 366 U.S. metropolitan areas, according to Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA) data. In 2000, it had ranked 287th. The Jacksonville metropolitan area, with a population of 173,064, had the top income per person of any North Carolina community in 2009. In 2000, it ranked 13th of 14 metro areas in the state. The USA TODAY analysis finds that 16 of the 20 metro areas rising the fastest in the per-capita income rankings since 2000 had military bases or one nearby."

[[http://www.usatoday.com/printedition/news/20100817/1amilitary17\\_st.art.htm](http://www.usatoday.com/printedition/news/20100817/1amilitary17_st.art.htm)]

Globally, the top defense contractors took in \$635 billion in 2009. Of that, the U.S. Defense industries had revenues of \$385 billion. Not bad in a time of global recession. All across America states are in the red. Counties and cities are awash in deficits. In some cities school days are cut back and street lights are being turned off.

Mayors across the country are turning to privatization deals to sell off priceless public assets for a song to private investors to raise short term cash. Hello, every time you pay a parking meter in

Chicago you are rewarding the private partnership put together by Morgan-Stanley – which includes the oil rich kingdom of Abu Dhabi.

This partnership will make \$11.6 billion off of us during the life of the 75-year deal. That's TEN TIMES what they paid for the right to fleece us. Pretty good return on a no-risk investment, I'd say! [<http://www.businessweek.com/news/2010-08-09/morgan-stanley-group-s-11-billion-makes-chicago-taxpayers-cry.html> ]

If this isn't enough to give you palpitations, consider this. Morgan-Staley received \$10 billion in federal bail out funds. We paid a private company to buy our own parking meters for a song. They risked nothing.

So we have to connect the dots and understand that the plight of Cook County – of all America's counties – is tied directly to this federal mis-allocation of our own money.

If I am elected Cook County Board President I intend to vividly and dramatically connect the dots and I'll go to the chief executives of America's other nine biggest counties and make the case that together we must pressure our Congressmen, or Senators and our President to change this funding formula disaster. The federal government's inane spending priorities are KILLING America's cities and counties.

We need a County Board President to take care of business here at home. But it is my strong argument that one of the best ways to do this is to raise hell with our allies from counties across the country. We need to change the way Washington spends our money.

If we here in Illinois could correct that structural deficit by even ten percent – that would mean almost \$2 billion of extra revenue to the state. If we correct it by twenty percent, that's an additional \$4 billion annually. These dots definitely need connecting.

