

RUNNING
for **REAL**

THE SUSTAINABLE RUNNER'S GUIDE TO The Bank of America Chicago Marathon

As runners, we practice sustainability all the time. If we didn't sustain our bodies with adequate fuel and recovery, we wouldn't be able to run! In turn, running, especially getting outside and connecting with nature, helps to sustain us mentally and emotionally. Since you requested this guide, you're clearly someone who also cares about sustainability in the broader sense. We hope that you'll find some helpful - and fun! - suggestions here to make your [Bank of America Chicago Marathon](#) experience even more special!

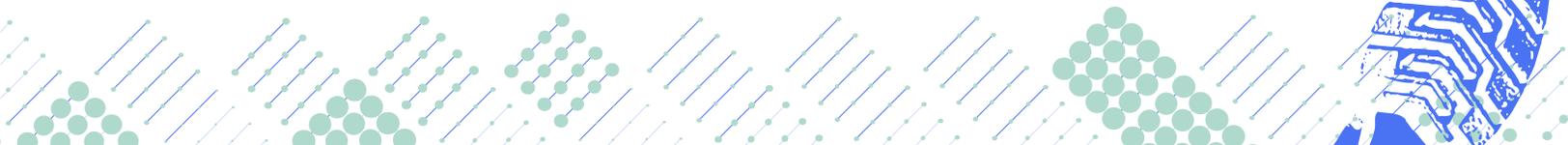
You may live in Chicago, but there's a good chance that you're traveling there from some distance away to take part in the Chicago Marathon. That may have you feeling a little guilty about your carbon footprint, specifically the emissions produced by flying or driving there.

First of all, give yourself some grace. You probably put effort into your daily life to do what's best for the planet, which honestly is more than most people do. You also need to take care of yourself, and since we've established that running and racing is a way to do that, enjoy this opportunity!

Having so said, there are ways that you can offset your carbon footprint. But before you do that, you need to know what your carbon footprint is. There are a number of calculators online, but these are two recommended ones:

If you're in the United States, try [CoolClimate Calculator](#). For UK residents, the [WWF Footprint Calculator](#) is a good option. One of these is also probably the best choice for those living in other countries, although the data will be less accurate.

The Chicago Marathon has partnered with [Cool Effect](#) to provide participants a way to offset emissions from travel to the event. Proceeds support Cool Effect's portfolio of offset projects around the world, such as clean cookstoves, forest preservation and methane capture. If you're racing, you can purchase offsets through your [marathon account](#). If you're going as a spectator, you can calculate your travel footprint and purchase offsets from Cool Effect [here](#).



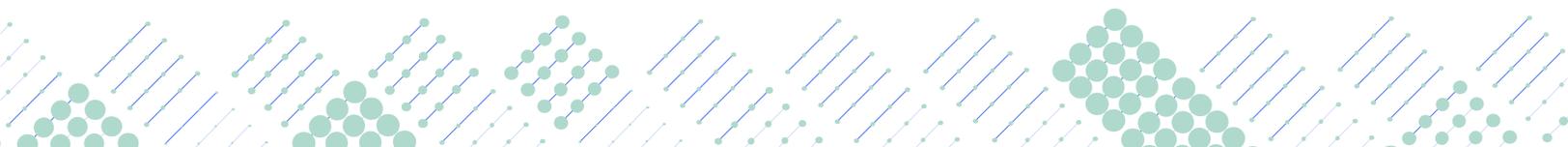
One note about carbon offsets, while they are an affordable and easy way to support environmental initiatives and projects, they are also a way for corporations and major contributors to climate change (like the 100 companies responsible for 71% of global emissions) to bend the rules to carry on as they are, while claiming that they are “on track” to reach net zero emissions by 2050. It is likely that soon carbon offsets will not be as inexpensive or will be totally revamped to ensure they are going to the environmental initiatives that are actually working to reduce climate change. Try not to become too reliant on them as your way to continue living a high-carbon lifestyle. Instead, make it a regular habit to donate monthly to environmental nonprofits that could use our support.

These are some nonprofits for you to consider:

- [350.org](https://www.350.org)
- [American Rivers](https://www.americanrivers.org)
- [Environmental Defense Fund](https://www.environmentaldefensefund.org)
- [Indigenous Climate Action](https://www.indigenousclimateaction.org)
- [Natural Resources Defense Council](https://www.nrdc.org)
- [Nature Conservancy](https://www.natureconservancy.org)
- [Protect Our Winters](https://www.protectourwinters.org)
- [Rainforest Foundation US](https://www.rainforestfoundation.org)
- [Runners for Public Lands](https://www.runnersforpubliclands.org)
- [Sierra Club](https://www.sierraclub.org)



However, your first step should always be to eliminate, or at least minimize, your impact on the environment whenever possible. Whether you’re at home or traveling, one way to do that is by patronizing businesses that are committed to sustainability. Since 2010, the Bank of America Chicago Marathon has been a leader in developing and executing sustainable and socially responsible practices at mass participation events, so you’re already off to a good start by running this race!



THE BANK OF AMERICA CHICAGO MARATHON

The [Council for Responsible Sport](#) has partnered with the Marathon since 2012. Their mission is to work with events that strive to make a difference in their communities and to independently verify that socially and environmentally responsible work is done at those events.

In 2019, the Marathon joined the United Nations' "[Sports for Climate Action](#)," which "aims at supporting and guiding sports actors in achieving global climate change goals."

Much of the work that the Marathon does to create a sustainable event is behind the scenes, but these are just a few examples that you may notice:

- The participant guide and official program are available in digital format only, which will result in over 25 tons of paper not being used.
- The official Nike running shirt is made out of 100% recycled polyester, made from a new blend of recycled plastic bottles and polyester fabric scraps. In addition to reducing waste, recycled polyester reduces carbon emissions by up to 30% compared to virgin polyester.
- Race medals are no longer individually packaged in plastic.
- Carpet has been eliminated at the race expo. That saves 55.04 metric tons of [CO₂e](#), which is equivalent to flying on a commercial airliner from Chicago to London 17 times.
- Over 100 volunteers will form the "Green Team" to help race participants and spectators make the right choices on disposing of waste in order to divert materials from landfills and reduce the event's overall impact on the environment.
- Water served before, during, and after the race will be in cups made from bamboo, which will be composted afterwards, along with banana peels and apple core remains. That compost will be donated to local community gardens.
- The Heatsheet blankets distributed after the race will be collected in post-race areas of Grant Park. They'll be upcycled into composite boards that will be used to create benches for community parks.
- Bottles and other recyclable materials collected along the course will be used to make yarn that will be woven into fabric to create signage for future events.
- Clothing discarded at the race will be donated to the Salvation Army and to Illinois AmVets. Unused food and water will be donated to the Greater Chicago Food Depository and Feed the Hungry.

TRANSPORTATION



Train, plane, or automobile? Which is the most environmentally friendly way to travel?

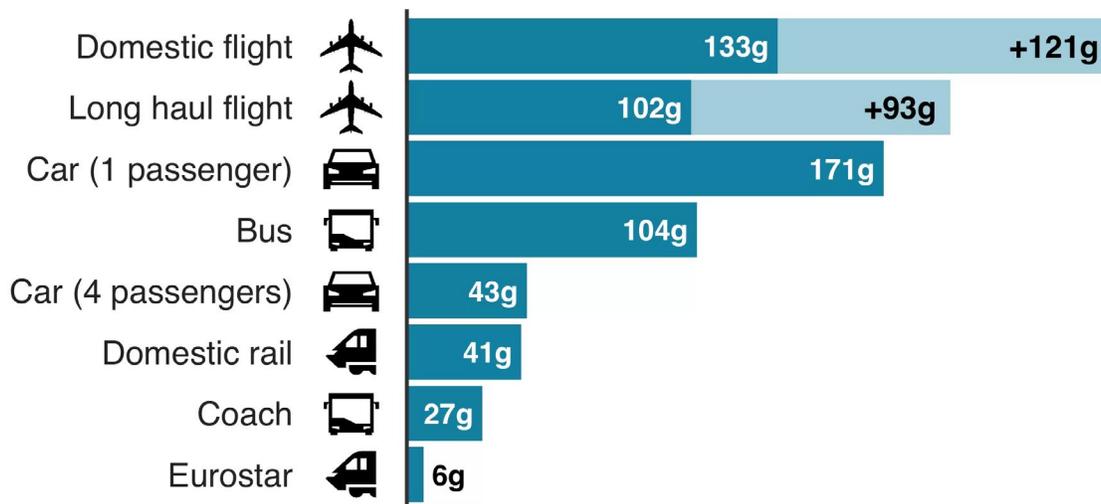
Planes emit the most carbon dioxide into the atmosphere, but their emissions can vary considerably depending on the type of flight. Taking off uses more fuel than cruising, so for shorter flights, it accounts for a larger percentage of the trip. It also means that a direct flight has lower emissions than a multi-leg trip to the same destination. Additionally, the more passengers there are on a flight, the lower the plane's emissions are per capita.

Because a plane's carbon emissions may be divided among a large number of passengers, it's possible for automobile travel to actually be more environmentally damaging than flying, as this chart shows. However, the more passengers there are in your car, the lower your per capita carbon footprint will be.

Emissions from different modes of transport

Emissions per passenger per km travelled

■ CO2 emissions ■ Secondary effects from high altitude, non-CO2 emissions



Note: Car refers to average diesel car

Source: BEIS/Defra Greenhouse Gas Conversion Factors 2019



Source: <https://www.bbc.com/news/science-environment-49349566>

Of course, time is a major factor in long-distance travel, and flying is often the only feasible option. But if you have time, consider taking to the rails! Per capita, a train emits less CO₂ than a car carrying four people, and is even more favorable compared to a car with only a driver or with fewer than three passengers. Train travel also allows you to see some beautiful parts of the land you're crossing, sights you would miss by flying miles above them or driving along interstate highways.

Amtrak offers service to Chicago's [Union Station](#) from [many U.S. cities](#). Even if you're not traveling by train, the station, built in 1925, is worthy of a visit to admire its stunning architecture.

If you're coming from the west, the [California Zephyr](#) originates in San Francisco, travels across the Sierra Nevada and the Rockies, and wends its way through Nevada, Utah, Colorado, Nebraska, and Iowa on its way to Illinois.

The [Capitol Limited](#) runs from Washington, D.C. through the Potomac Valley, past historic Harpers Ferry, West Virginia, through Maryland and the Allegheny Mountains into Pittsburgh, then across Ohio and Indiana en route to Chicago.

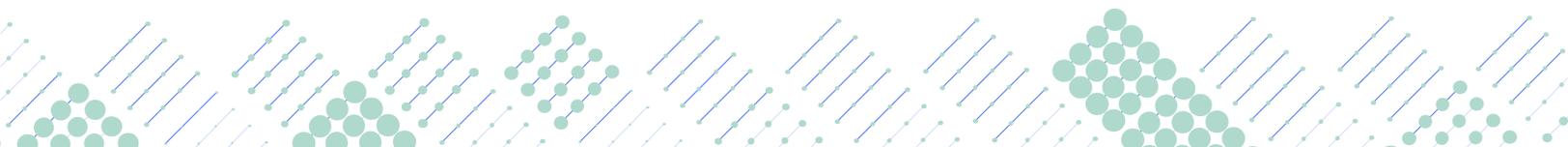
The [Cardinal](#) takes a southerly route from New York City, going through New Jersey and Maryland to Washington, D.C., through the Virginia Piedmont, over the Blue Ridge and Allegheny mountains into West Virginia, along the Ohio River, and through Indiana before it heads north to Chicago.

Further south, the [City of New Orleans](#) departs, appropriately enough, from NOLA, going through Louisiana, Mississippi, Tennessee and Kentucky on its way to Illinois.

The [Empire Builder](#) originates in Seattle, passes Glacier National Park as it travels through Montana, crosses the North Dakota plains, and stops in St. Paul, MN and Milwaukee, WI on its way to Chicago.

The [Lake Shore Limited](#) offers service from Boston and travels through New York (including a stop at New York City's Penn Station), Pennsylvania, Ohio, and Indiana, following the south shore of Lake Michigan, the Mohawk River and the Erie Canal.

If you do fly into Chicago, you can take advantage of local train service from both [O'Hare](#) and [Midway](#) airports. You can find details [here](#), on the Chicago Transit Authority website. Once you're in the city, you can use their [trip planner](#) to plan your routes.



Hotels



No doubt you've already booked your hotel, and realistically, during a busy event weekend, you may not have a lot of options. But when you do have the ability to choose among a number of properties, look for a hotel that practices sustainability - that could mean using renewable energy sources, conserving water, and recycling. If it uses local foods in its restaurants or partners with local businesses, those are also positive signs. Hotels that are members of [1% for the Planet](#) donate 1% of their revenue to environmental nonprofits and organizations, so you can feel good about patronizing them.

Two of the largest hotel chains are committed to sustainability, which should make finding a "green" hotel easier!



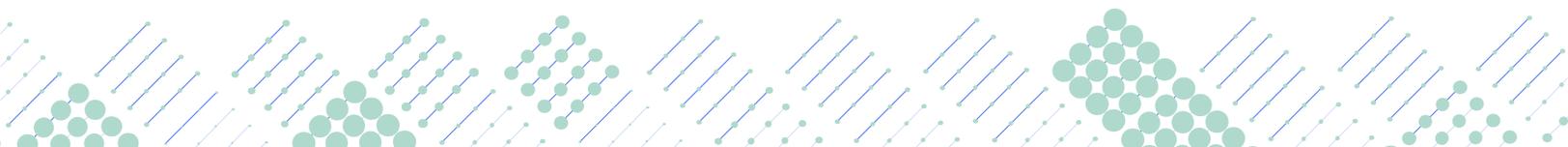
[Hilton Hotels](#)

Hilton has 30 properties in Chicago, including the [Hilton Chicago](#), the official headquarters of the Bank of America Chicago Marathon. Their portfolio includes Hampton Inn, Hilton Garden Inn, Homewood Suites, Doubletree, and Embassy Suites, so they offer accommodations for a variety of budgets. They've eliminated plastic straws, stir sticks, and cocktail picks as part of their initiative to reduce waste and single-use plastic pollution, and are also replacing small toiletry bottles with refillable dispensers.

One thing that their properties all have in common is Hilton's [Travel with Purpose](#) mission to double their investment in social impact and cut environmental impact in half by 2030. The [environmental portion of their ESG \(environmental, social, governance\) strategic framework](#) includes reducing emissions by 75% at their managed properties and 56% at their franchises, and cutting waste and water use by 50%.

[Marriott Hotels](#)

Like Hilton, Marriott has properties encompassing a wide range of rates, including Residence Inn, Springhill Suites, Courtyard, Fairfield Inn, and Renaissance Hotels. The [Marriott Marquis Hotel](#) is directly attached to McCormick Place, where the race expo is being held.



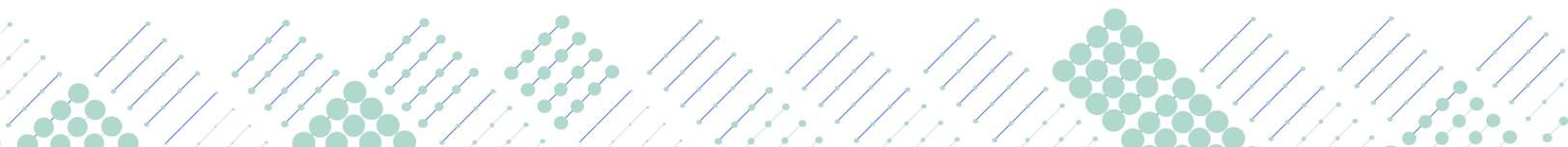
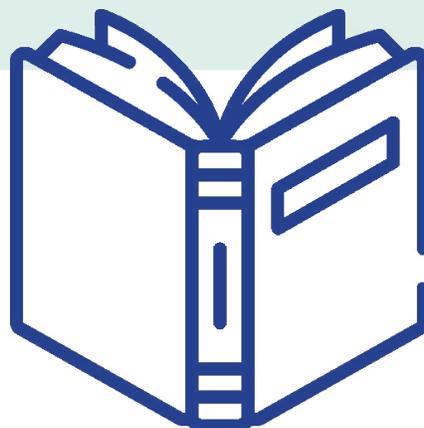
The motto of Marriott’s [Serve 360 Plan](#) is “Doing Good in Every Direction.” Their environmental goals include having 100% of their properties certified to a recognized sustainability standard by 2025 and responsibly sourcing 95% of their top 10 priority categories by the same target date. Those categories are animal proteins (inclusive of beef, eggs, lamb, pork, and poultry), bottled water, cleaning supplies, cocoa, coffee, guest room amenities, paper products, seafood, sugar, and textiles.

Becoming a Sustainable Runner, by Tina and Zoe Rom, to be published in the spring of 2023 by Human Kinetics, shares these suggestions:

“

When it comes to our own impact on the hotel, turning off lights and temperature controls when we leave the room are very easy acts to get in the habit of, but we can also be sure to bring those items that in the past we may have relied on hotels to provide. Bringing our own shampoo, moisturizer, body wash, and water bottles are easy steps to add. Additionally, bring a plastic bag or tub to take home the bars of hand soap. At least that way you can get full use of them, rather than using a bar for one night and it being thrown away the next day.

”



Restaurants



Your choice of restaurants can also contribute to how sustainable your trip is.

Becoming a Sustainable Runner advises:

When it comes to eating throughout your stay, try to select restaurants that are either plant based or have plenty of plant-based options, as they tend to take pride in their ingredients. Restaurants that are known for working with local farms and using organic ingredients are likely to have compostable packaging and try to minimize their environmental impact. Get used to carrying your own bamboo utensils so you do not need to request them from restaurants. If you have children, be sure to bring along their water bottles (along with your own!), rather than receiving plastic cups from restaurants you may be frequenting. Bringing a travel-sized container with dish soap means you can easily wash your utensils and water bottles to feel clean on-the-go.

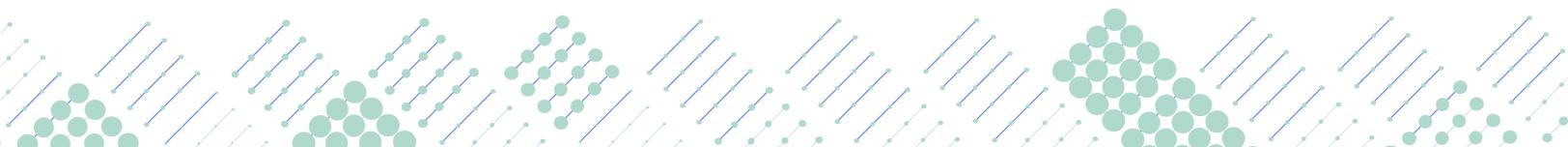
If you return to your room to eat, be sure to wash out (with soap!) any plastic containers before putting them in the recycling bin.

Happily, there are plenty of restaurants in Chicago that make dining out sustainably a pleasure.

NEAR THE EXPO

You'll be picking up your race packet at the [Abbott Health & Fitness Expo](#), held in the Lakeside Center of [McCormick Place](#). You can learn about what McCormick Place is doing for the environment [here](#). With over 100 exhibitors, you'll likely be there for a while and be ready for something to eat when you're done!

These are some sustainable dining options near McCormick Place. We haven't had a chance to try them (yet!) but they're highly rated on Tripadvisor and Yelp.



[La Cantina](#) - 1911 S. Michigan Ave.

La Cantina is proud to have a large vegan menu for you to choose from with Upton's Seitan Chorizo and Ground Beef, Good Planet Mozzarella vegan cheese, Tofutti vegan sour cream, and other vegan options. Whether your visit to La Cantina is to enjoy a margarita and complimentary chips and salsa, or to have a luxurious, authentic Mexican meal, La Cantina welcomes you to enjoy the best Mexican food in Chicago!

[Mustard Seed Kitchen](#) - 49 E. Cermak

Perennial favorites like chicken Alfredo and roasted chicken and mashed potatoes are alongside less expensive fare, like chicken gumbo and tomato soup. An assortment of burgers, salads and entrees round out the menu. Mustard Seed Kitchen is takeout-only, which Chef Erick Williams said has worked out well in his quest to reduce its carbon footprint. The restaurant only uses reusable cleaning products. Most of its takeout containers are compostable, with the goal to make all of them compostable in the future.

[Nana](#) - Halstead & 33rd St.

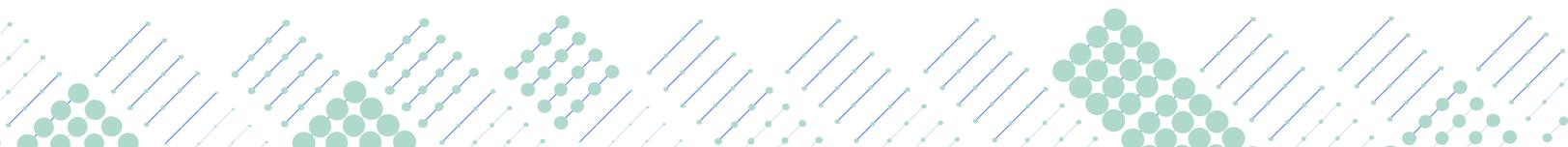
Enjoy a hearty, Latin-inspired brunch with great coffee and fun cocktails in a casual counter-serve setting. Order at our counter and relax in our self-seating dining room while we prepare your food and drinks. Our friendly team members will bring everything out to your table when it's ready.

[South Loop Market](#) - (7 locations)

South Loop Market provides a wide selection of products in a friendly, convenient environment. Here you will find everything and anything, from staple products and brands to specialty items that you don't see often. You will also find a great selection of organic and natural products, many from local suppliers.

[Spoke & Bird](#) - 205 E 18th St.

The Spoke & Bird Cafe (South Loop) is your neighborhood farm-to-table cafe and beer garden featuring a seasonal, made-from-scratch menu sourced from local farms, local brews on tap and a full coffee bar. We provide delicious and healthy meal options for breakfast, lunch, and dinner plus a retail shop. We source all of our ingredients locally — including organic milk and milk substitutes, organic syrups, local produce, fair-trade coffee, and more!





NEAR THE FINISH LINE

The marathon starts and finishes in [Grant Park](#). Less-than-healthy fast food options abound in the area, but there are some more wholesome options. These are a few nearby.

[Hannah's Bretzel](#) - 66 W. Randolph St.

We are über sandwich makers. We love food, more so we love making sandwiches! über to us means tasty. über also means organic, whole grain, free of chemical additives, healthy, and nutritionally balanced. It also means serving you our sandwiches with the smallest environmental footprint possible by powering our stores 100 percent with wind + solar, delivering your order in an electric Mini Cooper with biodegradable or recyclable packaging, and composting our food waste. Our philosophy is simple; start with quality ingredients, make fresh and tasty sandwiches, and follow with a conscience.

[Protein Bar & Kitchen](#) - 151 N. Michigan Ave.

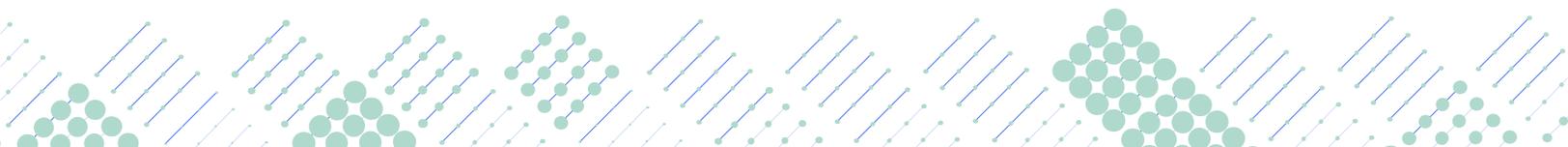
*In 2009, we opened our doors at a very small Chicago storefront with a very big idea. Instead of fast food, we'd serve **fast fuel**: shakes that were delicious, nutritious, and protein-packed. It was a success from the start but quickly became something even bigger... **a game changer**. We saw what was happening and got excited. **Let's keep going**. So we discovered quinoa and expanded the menu to serve a full selection of high-protein salads, wraps, and bowls customizable for all diets.*

[Roti Modern Mediterranean](#) - 33 N. Dearborn St. and 80 E. Lake St.

We passionately believe that eating better actually tastes better, too. We bring together wholesome ingredients and bold Mediterranean-inspired flavors to create meals that leave you satisfied and have you planning your next visit. Fresh food, always made with care from real, responsibly-sourced ingredients.

[Sweetgreen](#) - 150 N. Michigan Ave.

Founded in 2007, Sweetgreen is a fast-casual destination for fun, delicious food that's both healthy for you and aligned with your values. We source local and organic ingredients from farmers we know and partners we trust, supporting our communities and creating meaningful relationships with those around us. We exist to create experiences where passion and purpose come together.



Shopping



Buying things that you don't need definitely isn't "green." But everybody wants mementos of a special trip or event, and running the Chicago Marathon is both of those. Of course you'll have your medal and your shirt, but what else might you want to bring home?

Memories are more valuable than anything you can purchase. You'll probably wind up with plenty of photos of your trip on your phone. When you get home, why not print a few favorites to display? You may have frames that are packed away, unused, or that could be refreshed with new pictures.

If you keep a scrapbook of your races, why not keep an eye out for other items that you could add to more fully capture your Chicago Marathon weekend? Places you visit are likely to have brochures or business cards, or go a little outside the box and save a napkin from that great ice cream or doughnut place you enjoyed!

Of course, you may still want to buy something, and just as with hotels and restaurants, the key is to seek sustainable options.

For running clothes and shoes, [Allbirds](#) leads the way in sustainability. They have two Chicago locations, in [Fulton Market](#) (833 W. Randolph St.) and [Lincoln Park](#) (843 W. Armitage Ave.)



A native of New Zealand, Tim Brown was always well versed in the magical qualities of merino wool. Inherently curious, he began asking himself why such a remarkable, sustainable resource was virtually absent in the footwear industry. And with that spirit of wonder, the Allbirds journey began.

After years of researching and tinkering, Tim teamed up with Joey Zwillinger, an engineer and renewables expert. Together, they crafted a revolutionary wool fabric made specifically for footwear. The outcome? An entirely new category of shoes inspired by natural materials, and an ongoing mantra to create better things in a better way.

If you're looking for something unique, buying vintage items, whether in their original form or repurposed, gives them new life and keeps them out of the landfill, not to mention that they're frequently of higher quality than something similar manufactured today.

You can find beautiful clothes, accessories and home goods at fair trade stores. Shopping there means that your dollars will support craftspeople in developing countries who are paid and treated fairly for their goods. Fair trade principles protect not only workers, but also the environment. Principle 10 of the [World Fair Trade Organization](#) states:

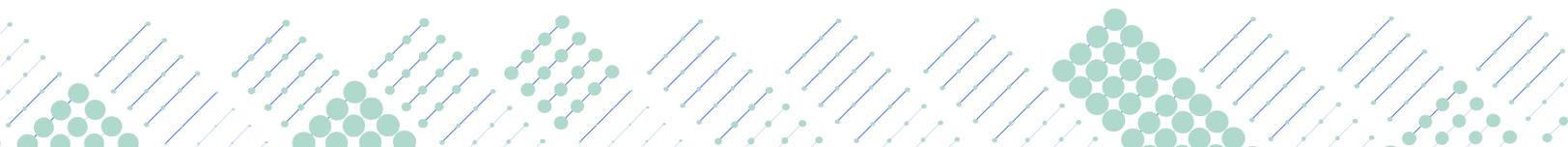
Organizations which produce Fair Trade products maximize the use of raw materials from sustainably managed sources in their ranges, buying locally when possible. They use production technologies that seek to reduce energy consumption and where possible use renewable energy technologies that minimize greenhouse gas emissions. They seek to minimize the impact of their waste stream on the environment. Fair Trade agricultural commodity producers minimize their environmental impacts, by using organic or low pesticide use production methods wherever possible.

Buyers and importers of Fair Trade products give priority to buying products made from raw materials that originate from sustainably managed sources, and have the least overall impact on the environment.

All organizations use recycled or easily biodegradable materials for packing to the extent possible, and goods are dispatched by sea wherever possible.

Just as shopping in fair trade stores benefits craftspeople abroad, shopping for locally-produced goods benefits the members of the community that you're visiting. Sometimes you can even meet the artisan, which gives extra meaning - and memories - to your purchase.

The neighborhoods of [Wicker Park](#) and [Logan Square](#) are two of the best areas in Chicago for vintage, fair trade, and locally-made finds. They're accessible by public transportation, and as an added bonus, they're along The 606, which you can read about in the "Green Spaces" section.



These are just a few suggestions; as you stroll through the neighborhoods, you're sure to find plenty of interesting shops to browse through.

[Neighborly](#) - 4710 N. Lincoln Ave.

We offer home goods, gifts, and artwork that are handmade, fair trade, or eco-friendly. Neighborly supports independent makers and ethical production. No child or forced labor, safe conditions, fair play, that's Neighborly.

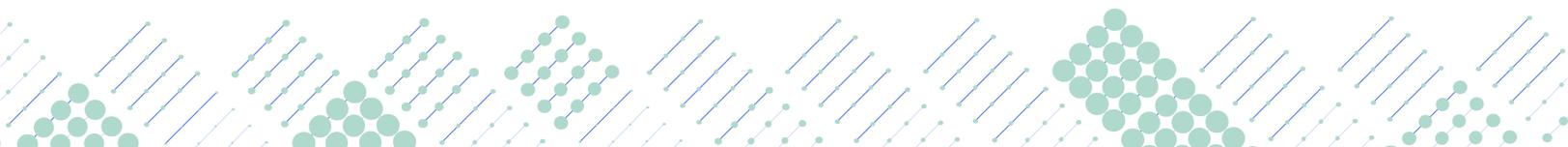
[Planet Access](#) - 4727 N. Lincoln Ave.

Planet Access is a unique, high-end retail store with a mission. All purchases made at the store support the programs of Search, Inc., which empower adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities to achieve their full potential.

Through our partnership with Toad&Co, we offer premier brands that specialize in sustainable, socially responsible clothing, jewelry, and home decor. Planet Access carries brands that tell a story – whether that's a story of social good, a story of a local Chicago artisan, or a story of a brand that is dedicated to eco sustainability. All of these stories have one thing in common, a goal to make the planet a better place to live, learn, work and play.

[Wolfbait & B-girls](#) - 3131 W. Logan Blvd.

Growing out of a community of makers and opening our doors in 2006, Wolfbait & B-girls set out to be not only a showcase, but also a resource for local artists. Wolfbait is where Chicago shops, but it's also where Chicago sells. A treasure trove of over 300 local artisan's creations (apparel, accessories, art, and gifts), as well as a handful of Chicago-based, women-run, fair trade companies, The Bait highlights our city's local talent in a unique incubator-style retail venue. Strengthening our community for makers, as well as educating customers about the values (both environmental and economic) of supporting local artisans and small businesses are primary goals. This is a people-driven project. Through artisan representation and customer education, the ideals of our growing creative community will be shared and strengthened.





Green Spaces

Chicago's motto is *urbs in horto*, which means "city in a garden." Despite this, at the time of the city's founding, there were few green areas. That began to change in the 1850s, thanks largely to the efforts of Dr. John Rauch, who served on the city's sanitation committee. He objected to the presence of a large public cemetery on the banks of Lake Michigan, the source of the city's drinking water. He was also familiar with the parks of Europe, and called public parks "the lungs of the city," necessary for the health of its citizens. He led a successful campaign to relocate the cemetery and in 1864, the area was renamed "Lake Park," which was changed to "[Lincoln Park](#)" after the President's assassination.

Today there are hundreds of parks in the city, covering over 8,000 acres, from small neighborhood "pocket parks" to grand public spaces like Grant Park.

CHICAGO'S "FRONT YARD"

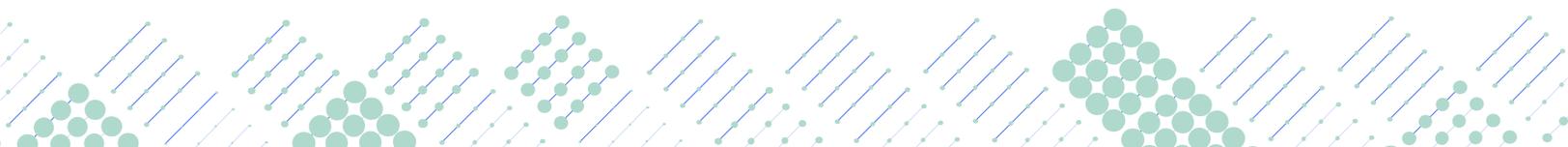
Running 26.2 miles may be enough time on your feet, but if you have the time and the energy, [Grant Park](#) is well worth exploring. It's Chicago's premier green space, totalling 312.98 acres. Its most notable features include [Millennium Park](#), [Maggie Daley Park](#), and the [Clarence Buckingham Memorial Fountain](#).

It's also home to the [Art Institute of Chicago](#) (familiar to many from an [iconic scene](#) in *Ferris Bueller's Day Off*), the [Field Museum](#), the [Shedd Aquarium](#) and the [Adler Planetarium](#).

THE PARKS OF JENS JENSEN

Chicago is home to several parks designed by revolutionary landscape architect [Jens Jensen](#). He felt deeply that people need spaces where they can interact with the natural world, so if you need to refresh your mind and your body before or after the marathon, you may want to visit one of his creations.

Unlike his predecessors, who tended to favor formal, neoclassical designs, Jensen was committed to working with indigenous plants and the region's natural landscape. He was a passionate environmental activist, a pioneer of sustainable design, and an early champion of native species. One of his first projects was the creation of what he called an "American Garden" in [Union Park](#). It was filled with wildflowers - some might call them weeds - that he



had gathered from the nearby prairie. In [Humboldt](#) and [Columbus](#) parks, he created “prairie rivers,” wetland gardens that incorporated native grasses, cattails, and water lilies. If you’re in Columbus Park, you can take a break at his “council ring,” a stone circle designed for contemplation or storytelling, where you can visualize your race beforehand or reminisce about it afterwards.

THE 606

Jens Jensen’s parks are some of the earlier examples of Chicago’s green spaces; The [606](#) is one of the most recent. Formerly an abandoned rail line, it’s now a 2.7 mile multi-use trail, connecting the neighborhoods of Logan Square, Humboldt Park, Bucktown and Wicker Park.

In the late 19th century, as Chicago’s population grew, more and more people were injured or killed each year at railroad crossings. The city decreed that for public safety, railroads must elevate their tracks. The Bloomingdale line, now known as The 606, was the last section to comply, and was completed in 1913. As the area changed, fewer trains used the tracks, and by the mid-1990s, rail service ceased completely. Nature took back her own, as trees and flowers grew between the tracks and wildlife returned. Soon the members of the communities below the line realized that they had a nature trail in their midst.

There are 12 access points to The 606, and it’s accessible by public transportation. You can simply enjoy the trail or use it as an alternative way to get around the city. You can find detailed information on getting to it [here](#).

 **SHARE YOUR STORY!** 

You’ve put a lot of work into preparing for the Bank of America Chicago Marathon, and the race is the celebration of all of the training that you’ve done. We hope that you have a wonderful, fulfilling experience in the Windy City and we’d love to hear about it! Whether it’s a race report or what you did as a sustainable runner, please share!

★ You can tag us on social media with [#sustainablerunner](#) ★

