



CITY OF CHICAGO • OFFICE OF THE MAYOR



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CITY OF CHICAGO CELEBRATES ARBOR DAY WITH TREE-PLANTING EVENT

This Arbor Day marks a tree-planting milestone for the City, with over 60,000 new trees planted since 2022 and over 180,000 trees trimmed since 2023.

CHICAGO – Mayor Brandon Johnson today joined the Chicago Departments of Streets and Sanitation (DSS), Environment (DOE), and Transportation (CDOT), as well as the Chicago Park District, the Metropolitan Planning Council, Morton Arboretum, and Openlands, for a tree-planting event in West Woodlawn hosted by Blacks in Green. The event marks the annual Arbor Day holiday, which promotes the planting of trees, and aligns with the start of Spring planting season for the City.

“We are planting trees in the neighborhoods in Chicago that need them most,” said **Mayor Brandon Johnson**. “With the Our Roots program, we’re taking significant steps to ensure that every Chicagoan can enjoy the beauty and benefits of trees. I also want to thank our City workers who have trimmed hundreds of thousands of trees while planting tens of thousands. Chicagoans across our city appreciate the hard work that you do every day to make our city greener and, somehow, even more beautiful.”

In Chicago, many neighborhoods on the South and West sides lack adequate tree cover. Without a strong urban tree canopy, these neighborhoods are more vulnerable to extreme heat and severe flooding, which have negative effects on residents’ health and homes.

Since 2022, the Our Roots Chicago project has made significant steps towards addressing this problem. With a community-driven and data-informed approach, the interdepartmental project focuses on equitably planting new trees across the city, with a focus on priority areas where the urban canopy is sparse. As of April 2025, DSS and CDOT have planted over 60,000 parkway trees, with over 25,000 in areas that need trees the most.

The City’s work is bolstered by community efforts related to the planting and maintaining of trees. Programs like the Tree Ambassador program, an initiative of the Morton Arboretum’s Chicago Region Trees Initiative, and the TreeKeepers



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program, an initiative of Openlands, help provide education to Chicagoans to help them become stewards of the trees in their communities.

Additionally, the input of the Tree Equity Working Group, a group of over 175 members representing non-profit organizations, community groups, advocates, neighbors, and other stakeholders, help guide the City's tree-related programs and policies, with a specific focus on equity.

"Making Chicago greener and healthier is an effort that requires the work of many," said **Angela Tovar, Chicago's Chief Sustainability Officer and DOE Commissioner**. "The combined efforts of the City and its community partners are helping ensure that everyone can enjoy the improved health outcomes and more livable neighborhoods that trees provide. With this work, we are planting more than trees – we are planting the seeds of health and economic prosperity."

Blacks in Green (BIG) is one of the groups providing important input in the Tree Equity Working Group and advancing climate action in the city. Since 2007, BIG, an environmental and economic justice nonprofit based in West Woodlawn, has been working to boost climate and economic resilience in neighborhoods through its primary initiative, the Sustainable Square Mile. This project aims to increase household income via the new green economy and increase community resilience to the harms of climate change by developing walkable villages with local living economies in energy, horticulture, housing, tourism, and waste. Ample green space, enhanced tree canopy, permeable surfaces to control flooding, and a combined botanical garden, farm, and arboretum are key features of their garden-oriented development. BIG is also creating green job opportunities through energy auditing, geothermal, and solar workforce development.

"Many folks know BIG's origin story is grounded in my Mississippi roots, where my mom and her eight brothers and sisters were born, 13 miles from where Emmett Till was taken and tortured. Blacks in Green now owns Emmett's childhood home and has planted three beautiful trees there. Today, here at the church across from Emmett Till School, we plant a Kindred Spirit Oak – a tall, long-enduring species," said **Naomi Davis, Founder and CEO of Blacks in Green**. "Here in the West Woodlawn Sustainable Square Mile, Blacks in Green has planted over 400 trees and counting. It's my honor to partner with the City of Chicago as we introduce next generations to this life-giving work."

The equity-focused approach to tree-planting is mirrored by the City's recently adopted tree-trimming approach. In April 2023, DSS transitioned from a request-based system to an area trim system to ensure that every block gets its trees trimmed on a regular schedule.



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“Since transitioning to an area trim system, we have seen major improvements that help improve the quality of life of all residents,” said **Cole Stallard, DSS Commissioner**. “In just two years, we have trimmed over 180,000 trees, some of which had never been trimmed before. With this new approach, we can ensure that all residents can safely enjoy trees in their neighborhoods.”

“CDOT is proud to be a part of the Our Roots Chicago initiative and to support the citywide effort to plant tens of thousands of new trees in neighborhoods across Chicago,” said **CDOT Commissioner Tom Carney**. “Trees are a vital part of creating more livable streets, making neighborhoods healthier, more beautiful and resilient. We’re committed to working alongside our City and community partners to create a greener Chicago.”

The Department of Streets and Sanitation manages tree planting through its Bureau of Forestry. Chicago residents can request a free tree to be planted on the parkway in front of their home by using the CHI311 app or by calling 311.

To read more about the City’s equitable tree-planting efforts, please visit the Our Roots Chicago page at [Chicago.gov/OurRoots](https://chicago.gov/OurRoots). To learn how your organization can become Tree Ambassadors, visit chicagorti.org/program/tree-ambassador-program.

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