

Chicago Urban Forestry Advisory Board

Executive Board

Jess Vogt
**Acting President/ Board
Member**

Joe McCarthy
**Acting Vice President/DSS
Forestry**

Rolando Favela
Secretary/Board Member

Daniella Pereira
**Chair, Policy Working
Group/Board Member**

Nuri Madina
Board Member

Cindy Schwab
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Jim Semelka
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Angela Tovar
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Ciere Boatright
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Tom Carney
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**Commissioner – Water
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Carlos Ramirez-Rosa
**General Supt/CEO –
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Maria E. Hadden
**Aldersperson – Environment
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MINUTES

**Meeting: April 3, 2025, 9:30-11 am
City Hall, Room 1103**

Minutes taken and submitted by Jess Vogt, UFAB Vice President, based on a meeting recording made solely for the purposes of minutes keeping.

1. **Call to Order** – Jess Vogt/Acting President
Jess Vogt called the meeting to order at 9:34 am.
2. **Roll Call**
Present: Joe McCarthy, Jess Vogt, Rolando Favela, Daniella Pereira, Cindy Schwab, Jim Semelka, Sean Weidel (CDOT), Will Tabiti (Deputy Commissioner Department Water Management), Ron Daye (Planning), Cathy Breitenbach (Parks), Alder. Maria Hadden
Arrived after roll call (*arrival point indicated below*): Angela Tovar,
Not present: Nuri Medina
3. **Public Comments**
 - **Marjorie Isaacson:** Identifies as TreeKeeper #4 but specifies they are today conveying personal comments about using the 311 system to report tree problems. Recounts that they saw a large tree to which a Little Free Library wooden box was nailed. Marjorie Isaacson reported to 311 (as a Tree Removal, despite definitely not wanting this tree removed, because there was not an option for Tree Inspection) and the member of the public reports being given an estimated time to take care of this was 56 days; in reality, it took over 6 months at which point they received a notification that the 311 request had been completed. But a few days ago, when Marjorie Isaacson visited the location, they found that the Little Free Library was still there. The member of the public notes that others have told similar stories of 311 requests being marked as completed while the underlying issue remained unresolved.
 - **Mary Honda:** Identifies as head of 47th Ward TreeKeepers Chapter. The speaker notes that they submitted a 311 request for a tree to be planted, got the tree planted rather promptly, but didn't get any communications about how to take care of the tree. The member of the public notes that this is a missed communication opportunity to provide tree care trips to residents.
 - **Will Porter:** Identifies as a TreeKeeper. Will Porter comments that they have observed trees freshly planted in Graeber Park that are directly underneath power lines, near gas lines. Has also observed many parks trees damaged by lawn care and weed whackers.
 - **Nina Cohen:** Raises a question about the perceived lack of coordination with underground and above ground utilities during planting since trees according to

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Nina Cohen seem to be often planted in conflict with both above and belowground infrastructure.

4. Approval of Previous Minutes

Feb 2025 Minutes still in draft form; approval of these minutes will happen at June meeting.

5. Consent Agenda: Metrics Table – *All items on the Consent Agenda are approved by a single vote with no discussion. See last page of Agenda for Metrics Table.*

6. Standing Updates

6.1. Update on Public Tree Inventories

6.1.1. City Parkway Tree Inventory status – Joe McCarthy/BoF

- Joe McCarthy reports that there is not much movement on the disbursement of the RFP except that they are changing the way the City will advertise the RFP. It will now be four separate contracts: three inventories for each of the three regions plus the fourth contract for the management plan. Joe McCarthy states that the BOF procurement specialist (Michelle Gamble) says that this is perhaps the best way to get it through the City's Procurement process. There is an "equity in procurement" rule that says the City should split up contracts where possible.
- Jess Vogt (and others) raise major concerns about the integrity of the final data produced if we have three different contracts and parties collecting the data.
- There is some urgency of moving it through the system – the inventory grant from the Morton Arboretum has a timeline and end date of 2027. There is concern that unless the BOF gets an RFP out this summer or early fall, there won't be time to have an inventory and management plan happen at all.
- Joe McCarthy notes that the City's sample 2021 inventory (data presented in the 2023 Urban Forest Management Plan) was collected by City foresters in three regions and then the data was provided to consultants. But, importantly, he stresses that this was a *sample inventory*, not a *complete inventory*, where the data was collected for much different purposes than the inventory. The sample inventory was the "quickest, dirtiest, easiest way to get data that we didn't have" – to give a preliminary idea of the entire Chicago public urban forest resource, in the aggregate. For a 100% inventory, on the other hand, the purpose is to actually use the resulting data to manage the individual trees.

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- Jim Semelka notes (and Joe McCarthy agrees) that there might actually be only one contractor who meets the requirements and is eligible to apply for the RFP.
- Cindy Schwab notes that multiple contractors would be more work for the City to manage. The City is acting as a general contractor in this instance and in charge of harmonizing work expectations, data collection specifications, and final product requirements, and – on top of all this – insuring data quality. (As opposed to a single contract that would put at least some of these tasks on the contractor.)
- Cindy Schwab also stresses that this would likely put the City at a greater liability, a greater risk for lawsuits: The question is: who is liable if a City tree is *not* declared hazardous during the inventory, but then fails and injures someone or damages property? If the City splits the contract, then the City might be liable because they would have been more responsible for specifying the exact way the data is collected by each contractor. If just one contract, then that single private contractor might be more responsible for the way the data was collected and hence more liable. Cindy Schwab notes that these kinds of situations are regularly encountered by her employer, Davey Tree.
- Joe McCarthy is concerned about the impact of the 100% inventory results on the grid pruning system: Presumably the inventory will reveal that there are a lot of trees in need of near-immediate pruning and/or removal for safety/hazard reasons and so crews will need to be dedicated to addressing those needs and thus diverted from the grid trim, extending the grid trim cycle from 5 years to perhaps 7 or even 10 years, which is too long for an adequate pruning cycle.
- Jess Vogt notes that the City is “digging out of a hole—an inadequately resourced urban forest [program] that has been inadequately resourced...always.”
- Joe McCarthy says that all this is further complicated by the lack of any written guidance from the grant provider (the Morton Arboretum, who is the administrator of the pass-through funding from the State) on the potential impact of federal funding changes. Joe McCarthy is unsure whether or not the various Executive Orders and stop work orders/start work orders will impact this pass-through funding.
- Daniella Periera notes that Openlands has received written guidelines from several federal-level grant agencies that all their awarded grants will be coming through.
- Jess Vogt thanks Joe McCarthy for continuing to advocate for the inventory.

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6.1.2. Parks District Tree Inventory status – Cathy Breitenbach/Parks

- Cathy Breitenbach notes that Parks received “responsive and responsible proposals” and has completed the review process. They are anticipating making a recommendation of award to Parks Board at May meeting and awarding a contract shortly thereafter. Joint procurement for the inventory for the Parks and for City street trees may be a possibility, depending on timeline for the City’s RFP.

6.2. Other UF mgmt./activities updates – BoF, CDOT, Parks

- No additional topics of discussion this month.

6.3. Our Roots Update – DOE/Jared Patton

- Jared Patton reports that DOE/Our Roots is planning an Arbor Day event on April 25th with the Mayor in Woodlawn.
- Jared Patton reports about the Tree Equity Working Group (TEWG): At the last TEWG meeting in March, several updates were discussed including: results of a survey DOE conducted of TEWG members on priorities and needs; a project by geographers at DePaul University to use drones for tree mapping; workshopping a TEWG mission statement; and discussing tree planting goals for the year.
- Jared Patton also reports that DOE is in the early stages of looking into formally connecting TEWG with the UFAB. This involves consideration of scheduling, meeting procedures (format, publication of agendas/minutes, etc.), and Open Meetings Act compliance. Jared Patton notes that although UFAB member attendance at TEWG is encouraged, if three or more of the official named UFAB members are attending TEWG in an official capacity, then Open Meeting Act (OMA) requirements (formal notice of the meeting, publishing agenda and minutes, anyone from the public can attend, and there needs to be an in-person attendance option) enter into effect.
- Many UFAB members state that they regularly attend TEWG calls and enjoy doing so and would like to continue doing so (although some of the City staff mention they could send delegates if required).
- Lots of discussion among the Board of how we can maintain the openness of TEWG, not disincentivize UFAB member attendance, and avoid triggering the more onerous aspects of OMA, namely the generation of formal Minutes and having an in-person attendance option. In person meetings in particular, while laudable, have not been the norm for the TEWG and so might change the character of the group a bit.
- Alderwoman Hadden notes that if the TEWG meetings are really and truly big open public meetings (which they are: anyone is invited and can attend if they have access to the Teams meeting link); if UFAB members are attending *not* in their capacity as UFAB members but just as themselves or as representatives of their organizations or City departments; if UFAB members are not formally listed on the agenda; and if attendance (of anyone) at these

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meetings is not tracked individually, then OMA will likely not apply. Jared Patton will follow-up with the Law department to verify this.

- Next Chicago Community Tree Equity Working Group monthly virtual meeting: Tues, April 8, 12 pm. Note the different time than usual. Please email Jared Patton for an invite to this or future TEWG meetings which happen virtually on Microsoft Teams: Jared.Patton@cityofchicago.org

7. Working Groups:

7.1. Education Working Group – Rolando Favela

- A recent virtual evening meeting in March was a lot more successful and well-attended than previous in-person daytime meetings have been: around 12 people Zoomed in.

7.2. Policy / Landscape Ordinance – Daniella Pereira

- Daniella Pereira introduces three recommendations (see ATTACHMENT 1: HANDOUT from the UFAB Policy Working Group per Landscape Ordinance “Common-Sense Ordinance-Level Changes”) that have been affirmatively approved by all the different relevant agencies.
- After summarizing the changes proposed in Attachment # 2, Daniella Pereira motions to take a vote to adopt these policy recommendations and take them to the Environmental Committee so that ordinance change language can be drafted and taken to City Council. Jess Vogt seconds the motion. There is no additional discussion.
- Motion passes unanimously. (*Note: Vote excludes Angela Tovar who arrived after this vote took place, but whose department was involved in earlier Policy Working Group deliberations.*)
- The three policy changes in Attachment # 2 are now officially passed over to the Environmental Committee for ordinance changes.
- Daniella Pereira mentions that there are a lot more Landscape Ordinance elements the Policy WG would want to amend but these are larger conversations and are looking into bringing on a consultant to support.
- In the meantime, the Policy WG is working on the Heritage tree program, another UFAB mandate (per the ordinance establishing UFAB).

8. Old Business

8.1. Discretionary Removal Letter: no-response strategy – Ald. Maria Hadden/ Leslie Perkins

- Alderwoman Hadden overviews the issue: UFAB wrote a letter to Mayor Johnson almost a year ago now requesting that Aldersperson discretionary tree removals be disallowed. Ideally, UFAB would like for any removal requests by anyone, residents, alders, and city departments included, to all go through the same evaluation and inspection process, with good reason needing to be provided for removing the trees.

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- It's not a priority for the Mayor and Alder. Hadden doesn't think UFAB is going to get a response at this point. Alder. Hadden says that this is a "third rail topic in some wards" and that "in a time of decreasing aldermanic power" this is one of the things Alderpeople still have power to do so there is reluctance to give that up. There is education and culture change to be done first. An ordinance attempt at policy change wouldn't be successful and Alder Hadden advises that UFAB does not go this route.
- Alder. Hadden suggests that perhaps UFAB could get a list of the number of tree removal request ward by ward and then target education in those wards that have the highest removal requests.
- Joe McCarthy notes that there has been a response from the Alderpeople with a significant number of alders against removal of discretionary powers like this because of the misconceptions around trees. Addressing the preservation of trees within equity areas in addition to tree planting is key.
- Alder. Hadden reports that there are Alderspersons who are very vocal about not wanting any more trees in their ward.
- *(Angela Tovar arrives.)*
- Cindy Schwab notes that perhaps BOF needs to be more simple about discussing the benefits of trees: shade, reductions in crime, improvements in property values, etc.
- Alder. Hadden notes that there are cross-over opportunities with people interested in air quality monitoring, people interested in real estate and property values, etc.
- Joe McCarthy notes that "there's fear out there... a storm's coming through, branches dropping...we haven't proven to the community that the City is being a good manager and maintainer of trees" that we already have. There have been instances of insurance companies threatening to drop properties if a public tree that is over the resident's house and perceived to be dangerous is not removed. So, the fears are founded. The City needs to do a better job maintaining and caring for the trees to help convince people they should want to preserve and plant trees.
- Ron Daye notes that there's a visual element and a design element to this: "You gotta bring more maintenance and resources to the maintenance" to preserve the aesthetics. "It's about the quality of the care" as it relates to "proper tree spacing." Ron Daye advocates that currently City trees in the public right-of-way are spaced to close together to "properly grow the canopy."
- Daniella Pereira, Jess Vogt, and a few others indicate disagreement with this idea that spacing is too tight.
- Daniella Pereira asks how can Tree Ambassadors, TreeKeepers, Alders, and others all work together to do some tree education simultaneously to the pruning that's happening. Alder. Hadden notes that the Alders know when pruning is happening because BOF tells the Wards; this is great and improves the Alders' ability to tell residents what's going on (pruning) and what the benefits of this approach is (e.g., systematic pruning results in fewer branches down in storms).

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- Ron Daye suggests that when trees are planted too close together the branches grow into each other, branch attachment is weaker, causing more branch failures.
- Daniella Pereira suggests that it is not tree spacing that's causing the dropped branches but rather the care of those trees. Ron Daye counters that it's harder to care for trees when too many are planted too closely together.
- Jess Vogt notes that there is research to support planting more trees and closer together because not all trees planted will survive to maturity and the point where the branches are interfering with one another. Jess Vogt also notes that some urban foresters are actually arguing that urban trees should be planted *more* densely to produce even more urban forest benefits.
- Alder. Hadden brings the discussion back to the issue of tree planting and removals in the Wards, noting that tree planting spacing is not an issue that has come up as a complaint, but perhaps UFAB can discuss tree spacing as it pertains to Landscape Ordinance policy changes in the future.

8.2. UFAB By-laws update – Jess Vogt

- Jess Vogt reports that she has received example Bylaws from other boards and commissions from the Law Department and will begin working on draft Bylaws for UFAB. Angela Tovar will assist.

9. New Business

9.1. Draft BOF Pruning Standards – Joe McCarthy

- Joe McCarthy provided a Draft Bureau of Forestry Pruning Standards originally created in 2011 via email to the Board in advance of the meeting. See Attachment 3: City of Chicago Department of Streets and Sanitation Bureau of Forestry Tree Pruning Standards for City Agencies 2011 Draft.
- Daniella Pereira asks why these were never officially adopted.
- Joe McCarthy responds that the operational staff feel they were being asked to change standards on a daily basis: "They don't want something written that they're being held to that then changes day to day." He stresses that these were originally drafted almost 19 years ago, then updated in 2011, but have not been updated since, so they will need substantial updates to align with current standards in the arboriculture industry: ANSI (American National Standards Institute) and ISA (International Society of Arboriculture) Best Practices.
- Cindy Schwab notes that ANSI standards are changing; new standards will be released very soon, so any standards the City releases should be built to accommodate changes in ANSI standards. She suggests that "people doing the work don't know the ANSI standards [at all] and aren't as educated as we'd like."
- Joe McCarthy agrees that the BOF staff needs much more education and training.

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- Cindy Schwab notes that whatever contractor does the inventory will use the ANSI standard language to describe the kind and level of pruning that is needed and so the BOF staff then conducting the pruning after that will have to be trained to know what that language means in order to know what work is required of them.
- Cindy Schwab notes that adherence to standards is an industry-wide issue. ISA has recently added “PPQ training” to teach prescriptive pruning qualifications. Cindy Schwab suggests that BOF should get some key people through this PPQ training.
- Joe McCarthy notes that BOF operational staff are extremely resistant to documents like the Draft Pruning Standards.
- Daniella Pereira suggests to conduct a joint pruning training with Parks, perhaps with Jerome Scott (Parks staff) who has trained hundreds of TreeKeepers in pruning. She also suggests that the Pruning Standards guide involve some more visuals of the problems and what not to do (e.g., Lion tailing).
- Cathy Breitenbach notes (and Jim Semelka concurs) that the ground-based pruning Jerome Scott trains TreeKeepers to do is quite different from the large mature tree pruning that needs to be done for many City trees. But a joint training of Parks and City staff on pruning would certainly be helpful for all, regardless of who ultimately leads it.
- Tom Ebeling (staff at Openlands, attending as member of the public) asks what’s preventing BOF from just adopting ANSI standards full out. Joe McCarthy replies that, verbally, that is (supposed to be) what the crews already do. But BOF also doesn’t have an adequate span of control and ratio of supervisors to crews; there is no head training agent who’s tracking everybody’s training or level of knowledge/education or skills.
- Jess Vogt wonders what the 2026 budget year ask should be to improve capacity – a head trainer?
- Joe McCarthy replies that UFAB should look at 2023 Urban Forest Management Plan (UFMP) and ask for the increased staff capacity justified in the UFMP. BOF is not staffed to capacity and doesn’t have the staffing to prune trees on a 5-year cycle, with people on disability or pulled off crews and “doing other things...acting in capacities that are inconsistent with the roles that they are supposed to be in,” so while on paper it looks like maybe BOF should be able to do the work, in actuality they don’t have nearly enough staff to do even the bare minimum.
- Daniella Pereira asks if there is a hierarchy of leadership within BOF and if this hierarchy results in conflicts between how the couple different unions within DSS/BOF are operating.
- Joe McCarthy replies that if crews are given directives from leadership within BOF and DSS to do things a certain way, that is the way they will do things. He mentions that if elected officials direct folks to prune a certain way, they will do so.
- Daniella Pereira clarifies, if this means that crews are not being directed by the foresters?

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- Joe McCarthy replies that, “We’re a community forestry program driven by elected officials talking to constituents” and then telling operational staff what they want instead of going through the expert-level staff foresters.
- Daniella Pereira clarifies, are the alders “going past the foresters to get stuff done?” Joe McCarthy responds that, “Forester staff are the Appendix of the Bureau of Forestry...nobody’s going through us to do anything. We’re just dangling there.”
- For the sake of time, Jess Vogt transitions to the budget and enforcement discussion.

9.2. Enforcement procedures of BoF/CDOT

- *(Discussed as a single issue with next Agenda item, 2026 Budget Year requests)*

9.3. 2026 Budget Year requests for BoF from UFAB

- Jess Vogt introduces this discussion as a single issue, suggesting that revenue-generating positions are allowable through the hiring freeze, so perhaps an Enforcement position is the easy thing to ask for.
- Joe McCarthy suggests that just staffing Forestry to capacity would be helpful – filling vacancies is crucial right now: a Senior City Forester (replacement for a retirement) + the City Forester position that is tied to the grant for the inventory. UFAB and BOF would like these positions filled.
- Alder. Hadden asks about the training agent position – Joe McCarthy doesn’t think there is a training position open.
- Alder Hadden clarifies then that the ultimate ask is first, for existing BOF vacancies to be filled, and then, for a new position as a Senior Trainer and potentially for a new Enforcement position within BOF.
- Angela Tovar notes that for the Enforcement position BOF/UFAB couple the ask with a budget and revenue analysis.
- Ron Daye notes that liability is a helpful framing here: Does the city have any stats on Liability - how much do we settle for when trees fail and the difference between increasing maintenance budget and the decline in liability costs would help pay for the additional maintenance staff?
- Jess Vogt asks when we need to have budget requests to Alder. Hadden and the Environment Committee? Alder Hadden and City staff suggest that by the June 5 meeting would be fine.

9.4. DePaul Our Roots tree survival research presentation – Jess Vogt & DePaul student Sydney Bosley

- See ATTACHMENT # 3: HANDOUT Evaluating Our Roots Chicago, an equity-based tree-planting program: Survival and condition of recently planted trees.
- Jess Vogt introduces her student, senior Environmental Science major at DePaul University and one of Jess Vogt’s research assistants, Sydney Bosley. Sydney Bosley then summarized the research methods and results contained

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in the handout. The most important takeaway is that trees in Our Roots equity neighborhoods (that is, for which planting locations were scouted, at least in part, by Tree Ambassadors) have *higher* survival than trees outside Our Roots neighborhoods.

- Jess Vogt adds some final context that these trees are barely 1 and 2 years in the ground so what Sydney Bosley presented now is early survival and condition results. She also clarifies that the finding that equity neighborhoods have higher survival rates needs some more data to tell us why – right now, with Sydney Bosley’s quantitative results, the researchers can infer that community engagement approach through the Tree Ambassadors program works, but her team will be gathering more data, including conducting interviews with Tree Ambassadors.
- Jess Vogt notes that these results will be published and if you have interpretive feedback, please contact her or Sydney Bosley (their emails are in the handout).

10. Remaining 2025 Full Board meetings: June 5, Oct 2, Dec 4 (9:30-11 am)

10.1. Call for add. agenda items for New Business at future full board meetings:

- ⇒ Location of Bureau of Forestry long term
- ⇒ Status of changing 311 options to include “Tree inspection” request and remove option for “Tree removal”
- ⇒ Workflow demo – what’s used outside City of Chicago – Jim Semelka, Cindy Schwab (for October meeting)
- ⇒ Budget
- ⇒ Letter to the Mayor summarizing UFAB 2024 activities – UFAB Secretary (Rolando Favela)
- ⇒ Back-filling positions on UFAB

11. Next Working Group meetings:

- 11.1.Policy: May 1, 2025 – 1-3pm
- 11.2.Education: May 2025 – TBD date/time

The meeting was adjourned at 10:59 am.

Consent Agenda: Metrics Table

Metrics overtime available here:

https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1sEKPdNrYR2NWISP3B149pRqf7yqplv2mtCkFeXO_Qbo/edit?usp=sharing

METRIC	Dept.	2025 Goal (if applicable)	2025-April
<i>In current calendar year, as of ~1 week prior to meeting date, unless otherwise noted</i>			

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AREA TREE TRIMMING			
Trees trimmed	BOF		25,990
Grid sections of 915 total pruned	BOF		41*
Grid sections of 915 total pruned <i>since start of Area trimming program in April 2023</i>	BOF		162*
TREE PLANTING (April-Dec)			
Trees planted by Bureau of Forestry	BOF	6000	0
Trees planted by Department of Transportation, <i>excluding</i> capital projects	CDOT	4000	0
Trees planted by Department of Transportation through capital improvement projects	CDOT	1000-2000	0
Trees planted by the Chicago Parks District	CPD		0
TREE REMOVALS			
Trees removed by Bureau of Forestry	BOF		425
Trees removed by Chicago Parks District	CPD		not available
STAFF DEVELOPMENT/TRAININGS			
Hours of trainings attended by BOF staff	BOF		n/a
Hours of trainings attended by CDOT forestry staff	CDOT		n/a
Number of BOF staff attending trainings	BOF		31**
Number of CDOT staff attending trainings	CDOT		not available
Number of BOF ISA Certified Arborists	BOF		36
Number of BOF SAF Certified Foresters	BOF		1
Number of SAF Certified Urban and Community Foresters	BOF		1
Number of CDOT Certified Arborists	CDOT		not available
Number of CDOT SAF Certified Foresters	BOF		not available
Number of CDOT Certified Urban and Community Foresters	BOF		not available
Members of the general public in attendance at full UFAB meetings	UFAB Secretary		
PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT			
*UFAB members in attendance at UFAB Education WG meetings	UFAB Edu WG		n/a

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*UFAB members in attendance at UFAB Policy WG meetings	UFAB Policy WG		n/a
Participants in attendance at Tree Equity Working Group meetings	TEWG (DOE)		not available ***
Contacts on the invite list for Tree Equity Working Group meetings	TEWG (DOE)		not available ***
UFAB BOARD MEMBERS & CITY STAFF ENGAGEMENT			
UFAB board members (or delegates) in attendance at Full Board Meeting, of 12 total board members	UFAB Secretary		
Additional City staff members in attendance at Full Board Meeting	UFAB Secretary		
*City staff members in attendance at UFAB Education WG	UFAB Edu WG		n/a
*City staff members in attendance at UFAB Policy WG	UFAB Policy WG		n/a
311 DATA			
New tree-related requests received	BOF		not available
Tree-related requests closed (language?)	BOF		not available
NOTES: n/a: not applicable *Area trimming numbers missing data from some wards this number will be higher due to retired Dispatch Arborist (had temp employees subbing). – Joe McCarthy 3/24/25 ** Pesticide Training for Streets and Sanitation (non-Forestry) staff: 31 employees to start, 18 employees took general standards, operator's license. Arborist Training planned next month. – Joe McCarthy 3/24/25 *** April Tree Equity Working Group meeting scheduled for 4/10/25.			

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Attachment 1: HANDOUT from the UFAB Policy Working Group per Landscape Ordinance “Common-Sense Ordinance-Level Changes”

Provided to the Board as a paper copy during the April 2025 meeting.

UFAB Policy WG Handout – page 1 of 2

April 3, 2025

Fellow members of the Chicago Urban Forestry Advisory Board,

The Policy Working Group of the Chicago UFAB has been tasked with reviewing and updating the Landscape Ordinance and its impact on the urban forest canopy. As you may know, Chicago's current Landscape Ordinance and policies are outdated, limiting their effectiveness in addressing today's environmental challenges. The *Guide to the Chicago Landscape Ordinance* was last reviewed in 2000—over 24 years ago. The working group has determined that revisions are necessary to align the guide with updates to the ordinance.

Recognizing that updating the *Guide* is a complex, long-term effort, the working group seeks to demonstrate progress by advancing three common-sense ordinance-level changes. These changes require minimal updates to the *Guide* and would allow for immediate next steps.

We seek approval from the UFAB on April 3, 2025 to move this forward and advance three common-sense ordinance-level changes.

1. Reduce required soil depth for tree planting to align with current best practice. (10-32 - Bureau of Forestry)

Currently, it is stated that soil should have a three-foot minimum depth. However, the best practice around the City is to ensure the tree is planted at soil level and that there is 30 inches of soil below sidewalk slab where the tree is planted. Requiring a 30-inch minimum soil depth provides clarity and alignment with practices around the city to encourage proper tree planting.

Example language: 10-32-220 Required Parkway Trees – Planting Standards.

The soil volume and composition for required parkway trees or planters shall meet the following requirements: 1) soils shall have a 30" ~~three-foot~~ minimum depth.

2. Require planting in areas where minimum soil depth is achievable, where appropriate. (17-11 - Bureau of Zoning)

Currently, trees are not required in areas with less than 6 feet of soil, however only three feet of soil is required to plant a tree in the City. Updates to reduce discrepancy and reflect best arboricultural practices are necessary. Requirements for minimum depth for tree

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UFAB Policy WG Handout – page 2 of 2

planting can be aligned with industry standards. Requiring tree plantings where appropriate allows our urban forest canopy to be strengthened.

Example language: 17-11-0103 Landscaping and Screening – Standards.

17-11-0103-B Parkway trees are not required to be installed or maintained in the following locations:

- 1. above an area containing soil of a depth of less than 30 inches 6 feet, not including sidewalk pavement;*
- 2. below or within 50 feet of an elevated rail structure; or*
- 3. any areas determined by the Deputy Commissioner of the Bureau of Forestry to be unsuitable or unsafe for parkway trees.*

3. Require planting below elevated rail where appropriate. (17-11 - Bureau of Zoning)

Currently, trees are not required under elevated rail. However, planting in those areas is appropriate and a practice the city employs regularly. Updates to reflect current best arboricultural practices are necessary.

Example language: 17-11-0103 Landscaping and Screening – Standards.

17-11-0103-B Parkway trees are not required to be installed or maintained in the following locations:

- 1. above an area containing soil of a depth of less than 30 inches 6 feet, not including sidewalk pavement;*
- 2. below or within 50 feet of an elevated rail structure, or*
- 3. any areas determined by the Deputy Commissioner of the Bureau of Forestry to be unsuitable or unsafe for parkway trees.*

BOF believes Trees of certain forms and mature heights may be adjacent to elevated structures but not below (underneath)

Sincerely,

Chicago UFAB Policy Working Group

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Attachment 2: City of Chicago Department of Streets and Sanitation Bureau of Forestry Tree Pruning Standards for City Agencies 2011 Draft

Provided by Joe McCarthy to the Board via email in advance of the April 2025 meeting.

Pruning Standards Draft – page 1 of 4

City of Chicago Department of Streets and Sanitation Bureau of Forestry Tree Pruning Standards for City Agencies 2011 Draft

Introduction

This document outlines the pruning procedure and standards for all city agencies pruning street trees within the City of Chicago. It incorporates guidelines and procedures developed by the International Society of Arboriculture (ISA) and American National Standards Institute (ANSI) respectively. These procedures and standards have been developed utilizing the current research and science available as pertaining to tree health and arboriculture.

Objectives

To standardize pruning procedures and standards for all city agencies within the city of Chicago.

To promote tree health by utilizing the most current knowledge on arboriculture available.

To create a safe working environment for all city workers working around or within city trees.

To minimize the potential for injury to the public, or damage to private property resulting from city trees.

Reasons to Prune

The main reasons for pruning ornamental and shade trees include safety, health, and aesthetics.

Pruning for safety involves removing branches that could fall and cause injury or property damage, trimming branches that interfere with lines of sight on streets or driveways, removing and trimming branches that obscure streetlamps, signs, and security cameras, and removing branches that grow into utility lines.

Pruning for health involves removing diseased or insect-infested wood, thinning the crown to increase airflow and reduce some pest problems, and removing crossing and rubbing branches. Pruning can best be used to encourage trees to develop a strong structure and reduce the likelihood of damage during severe weather. Removing broken or damaged limbs encourages wound closure.

Pruning for aesthetics involves enhancing the natural form and character of trees or stimulating flower production. Pruning for aesthetics also includes pruning for vista creation or restoration.

Prepared By: Rob Sproule - Bureau of Forestry
Edited by: Joe McCarthy

January 2011
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Pruning Standards Draft – page 2 of 4

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Foundation for Standards

The City of Chicago recognizes the following benchmark standards for tree pruning and maintenance:

- 1) ISA Tree Pruning Guidelines
- 2) ANSI A300 Pruning Standards Part 1 2008 Pruning Standards
- 3) ANSI Z133.1 Safety Standards
- 4) ISA Best Management Practices - Tree Pruning

Occupational health and safety standards as set by OSHA should be observed at all times. Copies of the above documents are readily available for viewing by the Bureau of Forestry. All city personnel involved in tree work are required to be familiar and use these documents when necessary.

Pruning Techniques

Crown Safety (D - 3) - The most basic pruning technique includes the removal of dead, dying, and dangerous branches over 2" in diameter. In addition, sprouts or thorns located along the main stem should be trimmed off up to a height of ten feet. This procedure is used on every tree to be trimmed. The trimmer is required to inspect every tree they visit and ensure that this minimum is met.

Crown Clearance - The selective removal of branches to maintain proper clearances around private and public property. The Bureau of Forestry has outlined a number of minimum distances that must be met around objects such as light poles, street signs, and private and public building structures. This information is listed below. Clearances around public property should always be maintained. Clearances around private building should be maintained when hazardous conditions exist, or when the property owner expressly requests clearance and tree health will not be compromised.

Crown Raising - This technique removes the lower branches of a tree to provide clearance for buildings, vehicles, pedestrians, and vistas. The City of Chicago has specific height clearance requirements outlined in the City Ordinance (10-32-040). This information is listed below. If safety measures can be met, it is important to note, that to maintain tree health half (½) of the tree's foliage should be on branches that arise in the lower 2/3 of the tree. In addition, when thinning laterals from a limb, care should be taken to ensure well-spaced inner lateral branches with foliage.

Crown Thinning - As outlined by ISA, this technique is the selective removal of branches to increase light penetration and air movement through the crown of the tree. The intent is to maintain or develop the tree's structure or form. Thinning cuts are usually the preferred method of tree pruning. Thinning opens up the canopy of the tree. By reducing weight on the heavy

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limbs, energy is distributed throughout the tree more evenly, helping the tree retain its natural shape.

Crown Cleaning - A more thorough process, it involves the removal of dead material under the Crown Safety threshold of 2". Reserved for specific situations, Crown Cleaning includes Crown Thinning to produce a specimen tree.

Pruning Practices

Pruning practices and cuts shall be in accordance with ISA Best Management Practices - Tree Pruning and ANSI A300 Pruning Standards Part 1 2008 Pruning Standards.

Pruning Clearance Distances, Prohibited Practices and Limitations

-The ordinance (10-32-040) outlines that any tree, shrub, or other plant material that does not provide 10 feet of clearance above the public way or sidewalk is declared a public nuisance. As a result, the commissioner has the right to remove or cause to be removed the condition creating such nuisance.

In addition to the city ordinance minimums, the Bureau of Forestry has outlined additional height clearances required for trees in the public right of way:

- For limbs that spread outside of the grass parkway or tree pit/grate area, a **10 foot** clearance is required on the sidewalk side and a **14 foot** clearance is required on the street side.

-A clearance distance of **10 feet** shall be maintained around any public building if tree health/structure will not be compromised.

-A clearance distance of **10 feet** shall be maintained around any private building if requested by the property owner, and tree health/structure will not be compromised.

-Trees should be appropriately thinned to allow street lamps to light the street below, and for street signs to be visible to vehicular and pedestrian traffic.

-No more than 25% of a healthy tree's total canopy shall be removed in 1 growing season.

-To maintain overall tree vigor, at least one-half of the foliage should be in the lower two-thirds of the tree.

-Cleaning out the small twiggy foliage along the interior lower scaffold branches (secondary trunks) is prohibited. The practice increases the tree's potential for breakage in strong winds. The small twiggy branches in the lower center canopy serve as counter weight to buffer branch sway in winds.

-The practice of lion-tailing, where more than two-thirds of the inner foliage on a branch is removed, leaving leafing areas only at the branch tips, is prohibited. This shifts weight to the

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ends of branches and increases the potential for breakage in winds. It also reduces the carbohydrate reserves in the lower branching structure decreasing resilience to stress factors.

-Topping of a tree's canopy is never permitted.

-Reduction cuts should be made down to a significant lateral branch at least one-third the size of the branch being removed or not be made.

-A tree crew is required to complete the pruning outlined by the forestry inspector. Pruning less or more than outlines is prohibited without the express consent of the supervisor.

References

ANSI Z133.1. 1994. Safety standards. American national standard for tree care operators. Washington, DC: American National Standards Institute.

ANSI A300 Part 1 Pruning 2008. Standard practices for tree, shrub, and other woody plant maintenance. Washington, DC: American National Standards Institute.

Bedkar, Peter J. How To Prune Trees. NA-FR-01-95. Northeastern Area State and Private Forestry. USDA - Forest Service

ISA Performance Guidelines Committee. 1994. Tree-pruning guidelines. Savoy, IL: International Society of Arboriculture.

Whiting, D. Pruning Mature Shade Trees. No: 7.825.
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Prepared By: Rob Sproule - Bureau of Forestry
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Attachment 3: HANDOUT Evaluating Our Roots Chicago, an equity-based tree-planting program: Survival and condition of recently planted trees

Provided to the Board as a paper copy by Jess Vogt and DePaul University student Sydney Bosley during the April 2025 meeting.

Our Roots research handout – page 1 of 2

Handout for City of Chicago Urban Forestry Advisory Board April 3, 2025 meeting

Evaluating Our Roots Chicago, an equity-based tree-planting program: Survival and condition of recently planted trees

Research Objectives –

How do social-ecological factors affect the success of Our Roots street trees?

- How does survival and condition (dieback) compare for street trees in Our Roots neighborhoods compared to non-Our Roots neighborhoods?
- What biophysical characteristics at the tree- and site-level influence tree survival and condition?
- What community characteristics influence street tree survival and condition?

Methods –

Pre-inventory: Census tract selection w/ propensity score matching in RStudio

- Helped eliminate bias in sampling selection
- Matched Our Roots tracts to non-Our Roots tracts

Inventory: ~1,200 inventoried street trees in 36 census tracts

- Inventory was conducted in 2024, on street trees planted in 2022 & 2023

Inventory variables...

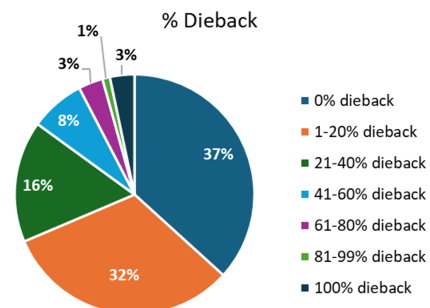
Location, Tree ID, Species, DBH, Mortality status, Crown dieback, Lower trunk damage, Overall damage, Planting area type, Maintenance (mulch/staking/piping)

Post-inventory: Generalized linear modeling in RStudio

- Two primary models- Survival & Condition (crown dieback)

Results –

Overall: ~8.3% mortality
Inventoried OR trees: ~5.6% mortality
Inventoried non-OR trees: ~9.9% mortality



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Handout for City of Chicago Urban Forestry Advisory Board April 3, 2025 meeting

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The following were **positively** correlated with street tree **survival**...

- Planted in an Our Roots census tract
- Planted in a tree lawn
- Planted later in the planting season

The following were **positively** correlated with **greater crown dieback**...

- Presence of lower trunk damage
- Presence of other damage
- Planted in 2023 rather than 2022
- Planted later in the planting season

The following were **negatively** correlated with **greater crown dieback**...

- Presence of full black corrugated piping

Discussion –

- No socioeconomic significance in either model
- Planting date affects survival & dieback
- Our Roots programming (such as pre-planting decision-making) matters!



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