



# Tree Equity Working Group

July 8, 2025



# Agenda

- Meeting norms
- Member spotlight: Galewood Neighbors
- Green Infrastructure Strategy
- Member updates
- Discussion

# ★ Meeting Norms

- Be kind
- Share your perspective and allow others to do the same
- Use the chat, raise your hand to speak
- Stay on topic
- Send updates and ideas in advance

# **Member spotlight: Galewood Neighbors**

Tom Drebenstedt

Beth Ranucci

# ★ Tree Planting Progress

CDOT - 3,207

BOF – 1,733

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City total: 4,940 trees planted in 2025

Current focus on maintenance, warranty inspections, and site selection

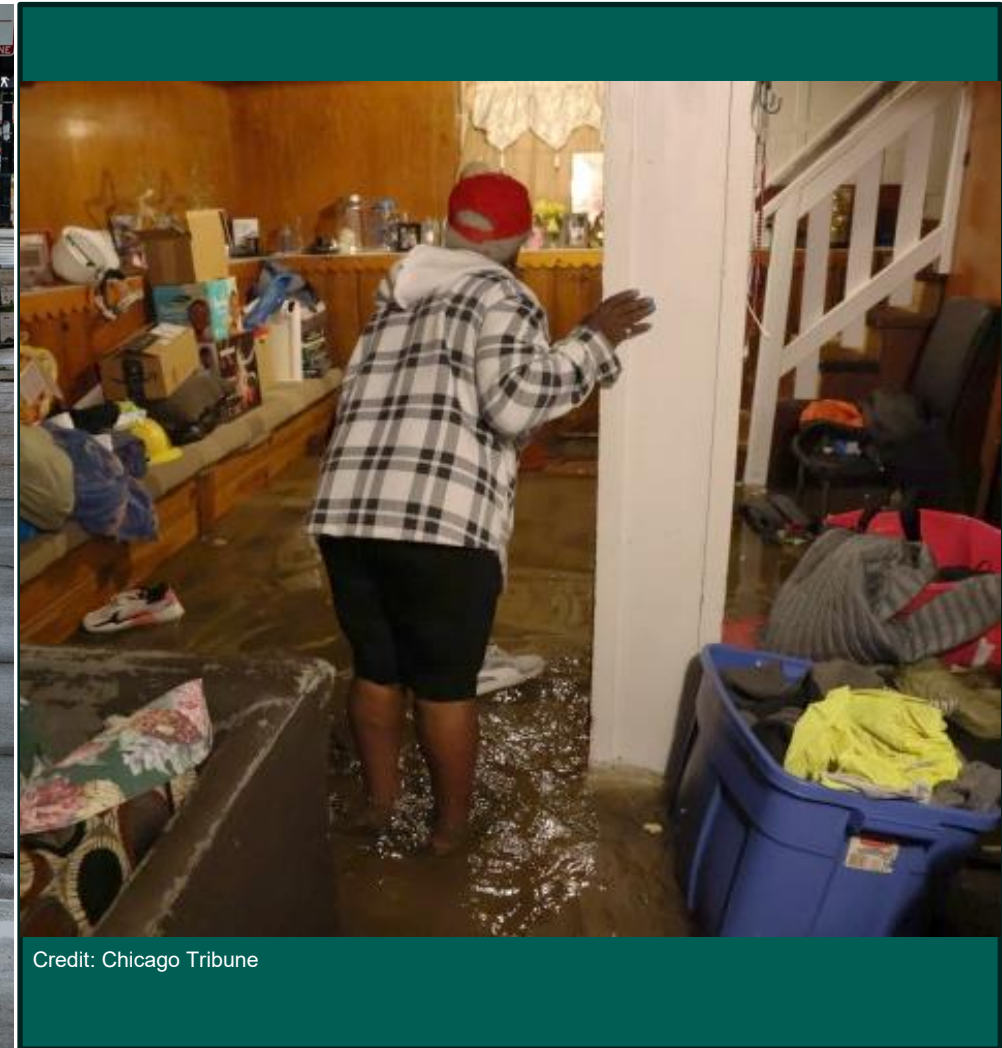
# Chicago Green Infrastructure Strategy

Tree Equity Working Group  
July 8, 2025

# Chicago's Stormwater Challenges



Credit: Colin Boyle/Block Club Chicago



Credit: Chicago Tribune



# What Can be Done?

The stormwater solution includes both **Gray** AND **Green**

## GRAY

directs stormwater  
somewhere else.

*Examples:  
Storm sewer  
systems,  
water treatment  
plants*



## GREEN

keeps rain where  
it falls, allowing it  
to soak into the  
ground.

*Examples:  
Rain gardens,  
bioswales,  
green roofs*





# Definition of GSI

Green Stormwater Infrastructure (GSI) refers to a range of practices that manage water where it falls by mimicking natural systems.

GSI is critical infrastructure that has rich economic, community, and environmental benefits including reduced flooding, heat mitigation, as well as access to green space & recreational opportunities.

GSI practices include the use of native plants, rain gardens, green roofs, permeable pavements, and other landscape features designed to absorb and manage stormwater on-site.

# Common Nature-Based Solutions



**Stormwater Planter**



**Subsurface Storage**



**Stormwater Trees**



**Permeable Pavement**



**Stormwater Bump Outs**



**Rain Garden / Bioretention Basin**



**Green Roofs**



**Cisterns/Rain Barrels**

# Co-Benefits to Nature-Based Solutions

## Beautification

Well-maintained landscaping adds beauty to spaces.



## Personal Safety

Well-maintained green spaces can help deter illegal activities, making communities safer.



## Education

Green infrastructure can provide opportunities for students and adults to learn about environmental issues.



## Mental Well-being

Green space can help reduce stress and improve mental well-being.



## Gathering Space

Beautiful gathering places can foster a sense of community and belonging.



## Physical Health

Green spaces draw people outside for recreation.



## Water Quality

Plants capture and filter stormwater, reducing pollution before it enters local waterways.



## Air Quality

Trees and plants can filter the air, making it cleaner to breathe.



## Habitat

Native plants provide food and shelter for pollinators and wildlife.







# *What is the Chicago GSI Strategy?*

# A Framework for the Future of GSI

What is the **current state**  
of GSI in Chicago?

What do we have now?

What is **working** with how  
GSI is currently developed?

What **isn't working**?

**What types** of GSI, and **where**,  
should be the focus going forward?

What do Chicagoans want to see  
in their communities?

What **policy and funding**  
recommendations are needed  
to make this happen?



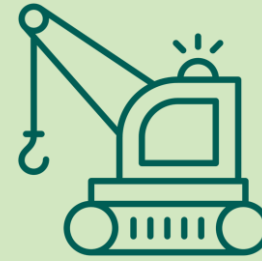
# Project Outcomes



**Improve  
water quality**



**Reduce  
stormwater  
runoff and  
nuisance  
flooding**



**Maximize  
community  
benefits and  
green jobs**



**Distribute  
GSI equitably**

# Street Trees as GSI

Chicago's street trees (estimated around 550,000 as of 2021), intercept and absorb 149 million gallons of stormwater annually.

Source: Chicago Urban Forest Management Plan, 2023

# Opportunities for collaboration

- **Uplift** current investments, programs, success stories
- **Educate** on different types of GSI
- **Solidify** GSI as critical infrastructure

# Share your thoughts!

## **What is one key message around street trees that you'd like to uplift for the GSI Strategy?**

- Is the connection between trees and stormwater clear?
- What co-benefits can trees provide?
- What is the most important role that street trees play in your community?



# Share your thoughts!

- How important do you think street trees are to reducing flooding in your community?
- How important do your neighbors think street trees are to reducing flooding in your neighborhood?





# Next Steps

Identify "hot spots" for GSI

Refine policy and funding recommendations

Public comment period – fall 2025

# ★ **Urban Forestry Advisory Board Update**

Last meeting: June 5, 2025

- City Parkway Tree Inventory
- Tree emergencies/care for new trees
- Heritage trees
  - Minimal Coverage and Protections-First
- UFAB By-laws update
- 311 tree inspection requests

# ★ UFAB Upcoming Meetings

Advisory Board

- October 2

Policy WG

- August 14

Education WG

- August 12

# Tree Ambassador Program



Meet a Tree Ambassador: Karen Roothaan



Tree Stewardship Through Storytelling with Puerto Rican Cultural Center



Tree Planting Toolkits for Communities

Subscribe to the newsletter for :

- Community Highlights (Interviews, Updates, etc.)
- Resources
- Plantings and Events





# Tree Equity Working Group: Openlands Update!





# Discussion

- Meeting recordings/notes
- Website
- Emerging challenges
- Vacant lots
  
- Other topics

# ★ **Next TEWG Meeting**

August 8, 2025

9:00am

Microsoft Teams

September 10

10am

HYBRID – location TBD



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