

Chicago Urban Forestry Advisory Board

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Minutes

Meeting December 5, 2024, 2-4 pm

City Hall, Room 300B

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

- The meeting was called to order by Vice President Jess Vogt at 2:07 pm.
- Malcolm Whiteside, former President, has recently retired as of Nov 30, 2025.

2. Roll Call

- In attendance: Jess Vogt, Angela Tovar, Cindy Schwab, Daniella Pereira, Jim Semelka, Nuri Medina, Sean Wiedel (CDOT/Tom Carney delegate), Cathy Breitenbach (Parks/Rosa Escareno delegate), Leslie Perkins (Ald. Maria Hadden delegate), Joe McCarthy (delegate for DSS BOF due to the recent retirement of Malcolm Whiteside)
- Malcolm Whiteside, Jr (recently retired) is attending as a member of the general public.
- Not in attendance: Rolando Favela is not present but sent an Education Working Group report to the Vice President via email. No representative from the Departments of Water Management or Planning and Development are present (neither provided notice of absence to the President or Vice President)

3. Public Comments

- Malcolm Whiteside, recently retired Deputy Director of Forestry after 37 years with Streets and Sanitation. Expresses his honor at being the inaugural President of UFAB and appreciation for his colleagues at BoF and the City.
- Nancy Wade, of Save Your Ash Chicago, delivered public comments re: elevating BoF to a status appropriate for the status of trees as a fundamental defense for the city against climate change. For her full remarks, see [Attachment 1: PUBLIC COMMENT from Save Your Ash Chicago delivered by Nancy Wade.](#)
- Amy Abramson, private citizen and TreeKeeper, volunteer with Reduce Waste Chicago: Has been attending working group and UFAB meetings for about a year. Reflects on recent budget hearings and dismay at the lack of knowledge of Alderpersons and others with respect to the importance of trees and urban nature. Would like to advocate that 2025 for UFAB be the “Year of Education” and involve the “cooperation and participation of all of us regardless of experience or area of expertise.” She is grateful that UFAB has consistently engaged ordinary people and “looks forward to a productive and educational 2025.”
- Tom Ebeling, representing Openlands TreeKeepers, delivered public feedback re: feedback from TreeKeeper participation in UFAB as gathered by a survey

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conducted by Openlands. For full remarks, see the [Attachment 2: PUBLIC COMMENT from Openlands TreeKeepers delivered by Tom Ebeling](#)

- Marjorie Isaacson – private citizen, TreeKeeper #4: Marjorie shared her GoFundMe story to raise \$10,000 for ash treatment in her neighborhood. She is grateful to have been able to work with BoF especially John Lough, who helped redirected treatment dollars to her neighborhood. She reported on her experience engaging local Special Service Areas (SSA) for green initiatives who also hired private foresters to look at trees on arterial streets and she is concerned that these policies and activities of the SSAs may be either duplicative or even sometimes contrary to what BoF does. She suggests that UFAB and/or BOF perhaps outreach to the SSAs to make sure there isn't conflict. Marjorie also mentions that when removing and replacing trees, it will take many, many years for a new tree to grow and be the size and provide the benefits of the original tree and Marjorie would like to strongly suggest that this be communicated to people when.

4. Approval of Previous Minutes

- Tabled to next meeting.

5. Action Items

- **Emerald Ash Borer (EAB) Injection Update** – Joe McCarthy
 - Joe McCarthy reports on behalf of John Lough who is at an Illinois Invasive Species Council meeting today. There were 10,370 ash trees surveyed in City parkways and about 60% were treatable (6,186 treated). 108 of about 900 grid sections were surveyed/treated. BoF estimates that there are a remaining trees 30,000 ash trees left to survey and that about 18,000 of these trees would be left to treat were treatment to continue. But currently, there is no funding for ash treatment in 2025 budget.
 - Leslie Perkins asks for an update on a long-term plan for which trees could still be treatable or are worth treating on a long-term basis, which should be removed and a timetable for that. Joe McCarthy says BoF does not have this information.
 - Jess Vogt asks if BoF has a number for of the 40% of trees that are untreatable, how many have been added to the removal list or already have been removed. Joe McCarthy says no BoF does not have that information yet.
- **2025 Budget Forecast** – Leslie Perkins
 - Every department was tasked with looking for cuts to fill \$1 billion budget deficit. Every dept needed to find 3% to cut and Leslie Perkins expects that ash treatment was one of the things cut for the 2025 budget instead of personnel.
 - Angela Tovar expects that as of this meeting there were no proposed cuts to tree planting at least. Dec 13th is the scheduled budget passage date.
 - Leslie Perkins notes that the tree inventory grant is still in play and planned for 2025. This is \$3 million and perhaps some of the knowledge that will

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come from that can help us assess the questions we want to know about the ash trees.

- Area Trimming Update – Joe McCarthy
 - Year to date is about ~61,000 trees trimmed.
 - Since area trimming commenced on April 7, 2023, there have been 130,000 trees trimmed during year-round trimming, 121 of 900 grid sections. (Grids are approximately ¼ mi x ¼ mi in size.)
 - Leslie Perkins asks for context about the number of trees pruned before the area trimming began. Joe McCarthy estimates BoF crews pruned closer to +/-25,000 trees per year.
 - Jess Vogt brings up concerns about potential over-pruning of trees, liontailing, and asks how UFAB can support BoF in not over-pruning trees.
 - Joe McCarthy says “we hear you” and expresses that there is some learning that still needs to happen in training crews. Especially, increasing the number of training agents available.
 - Daniella Pereira asks for written pruning standards to be provided to UFAB.
 - Joe McCarthy says that first these would be need to be produced. Written standards for trimming exist but are very much in draft form and are likely 9 or 10 years old and not yet given to crews. Joe McCarthy mentions that although crews are certified arborists there still can be wide variation in training. Additionally, crews out there are getting pressure from other departments to prune up more than might be desirable from a tree health and forestry perspective. For instance, if police are desiring greater visibility in a particular high crime area and ask for higher pruning heights, then this becomes a norm even outside that particular area. Joe McCarthy concludes that a lot of trimming and urban forest management is about managing people and this shift to area pruning is a challenge.
 - Jim Semelka adds his perspective as a practicing urban forester. He notes that there is some perception management that might need to happen because “when you’re pruning trees that might be 40” diameter trees that have *never* been properly pruned...it can look like a *lot* of material coming down” of the tree.
 - Leslie Perkins mentions an article that came out in October about the City’s shift to grid pruning and response of residents to it (link here, valid as of Janu 21, 2025: <https://illinoisanswers.org/2024/10/22/chicago-tree-trim-strategy-produces-big-results-despite-complaints/>). She notes that the article highlighted the overall efficiency improvements that have resulted but that some alderpersons aren’t happy with it.
 - Leslie Perkins also asks about revising the 311 system and questions that the “Tree Emergency” code could be misused in this system.
 - General discussion about the 311 options for trees ensues. All are in agreement that having Tree Inspection as a parent option inside 311 is the best solution for all of this – then the professionals get to come make the assessment about whether pruning, removal, nothing, needs to be done. Daniella Pereira comments that the issue is a workflow issue between 311 and Salesforce and how tree work orders are tracked internally.

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- Leslie Perkins asks Malcolm Whiteside who will be his replacement and our point of contact for BoF in light of his retirement. Malcolm Whiteside reports that James Sheehan will be the replacement and had hoped to be present but there was a lot of tree work to be done today because of so much wind last night.
 - Leslie Perkins highlights one of the tricky issues with shifting to grid pruning: when alderpersons receive complaints from residents about potentially dangerous or high-risk trees, the alder used to be able to contact BoF and have this resolved quickly. However, now with grid pruning, they're being told to wait their turn. Leslie Perkins suggests that a tree inspection request in 311 and subsequent process outside of the grid pruning system might help address these concerns.
 - Joe McCarthy suggests that Tree Inspection as a parent request within the Salesforce system could work and then it would be possible to train the dispatch inspectors in how to pull these out.
 - Malcolm Whiteside notes that if this would be to change, there will also have to be a change in the tree inspectors. Currently, they go out and are looking for a tree removal or hazards but not necessarily a more general need to be pruned: "we're not looking for extra work," says Malcolm Whiteside, so tree inspectors go out and look for a live tree and any hazards and that's it.
 - Jim Semelka suggests that a mobile work-order system really helps here: If the inspector has a system that works with a full tree inventory, and they're out inspecting a tree and if a work order needs to be made they can make it and prioritize within the existing system, rather than creating more work-arounds.
 - Jess Vogt notes that there's an empowerment angle: A resident who's able to say 'this tree is dead' and make their complaint within the system might feel better than if they can only select Tree Inspection. And if a superficially simple Tree Inspection creates a back-end workflow issue, then we've not solved the problem of residents potentially not feeling like the grid system serves them.
 - Jess Vogt suggests that a larger discussion about trees and technology (311-Salesforce) and workflow to be had and perhaps adding this to the agenda for next meeting. Jess Vogt suggests that UFAB would like to invite someone to the next meeting to help inform the board about how the existing workflow works and how can UFAB support and propose some substantive changes.
- Tree Planting Citywide Update
 - Joe McCarthy reports that BoF has planted about 7,800 trees planted this calendar year.
 - Sean Weidel and Alli Preble, both with CDOT, report that they have planted a little over 6,000 trees, inclusive of arterial streets plantings and streetscape/capital improvements projects.
 - Parks District will have planted about 2,000-2,500 once year-end tallies are finalized.

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- Angela Tovar notes that this is yet another year where the City has exceeded its collective goal of 15,000 trees and extends a congratulations to all involved in this effort and commitment.
 - Jess Vogt asks for an update on progress towards the original 75,000-in-5-years goal. Joe McCarthy's quick math says the total is about 65,000 trees planted to-date (in just the first 3 years of the program since the money goes through the end of 2026).
 - Jess Vogt further queries if the City has another 2 full years of dollars left in the original bond given this same planting rate. That is, can planting continue at a rate of 15,000+ trees per year through end of 2026?
 - Angela Tovar says yes, in theory. However, she expects that demand is going to be the issue moving forward in coming years. The issue is finding sufficient planting spots and especially continuing the momentum with Tree Ambassadors will be crucial.
- Tree Inventory Update – Joe McCarthy
 - Joe McCarthy reported that the tree inventory will be \$3 million total and is a grant, unimpacted by the current budget shortfall: Of this, ~\$2.7 million for inventory itself and another \$300,000 will be for hiring community forester and development of management plan.
 - RFP in Procurement currently.
 - Joe McCarthy reports that “technology is the missing link” in the grant currently because “there is currently no plan for where inventory will go.” He mentions that Bof is having a meeting next week with Dept Technology and Innovation (DTI) and the Catalyst subcontractor regarding finding a mobile solution for tree inventory. This might be leasing software from contractor who will conduct inventory or maybe if the Salesforce mobile solution for tree planting will be ready.
 - Daniella Pereira requests making sure that Salesforce and whatever software the tree inventory contractor uses “talk to each other.”
 - Joe McCarthy says that at present this is a missing link and he is hoping that the meeting with DTI next week will clarify.
 - Jess Vogt asks if the \$2.7 million for tree inventory and \$300,000 for management plan is part of the same RFP. Joe McCarthy says yes.
 - Jess Vogt asks if BoF could include in the RFP a specific request for technology recommendations and inventory use. Joe McCarthy says this is beyond the scope, but hopes that the new management plan will incorporate more community input and make guidance on equity tree planting moving forward.
 - Joe McCarthy suggests that there is a conflict with respect to spending \$3 million on an inventory when the City is not ready to use it. He highlights specifically the liability issue of knowing, “of having a database,” of where all the dead, dying high risk trees are and not having the resources to address this.
 - Mobile solution for tree work will help and that's already happening simultaneously, parallel, and separate to the tree inventory grant process.

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- Parks inventory update from Cathy Breitenbach: Parks is on a parallel track, but because they are smaller, the procurement process a bit faster. They expect to be out to bid with an RFP shortly after the start of the year. They are facing similar issues with respect to how to use the inventory once it's conducted, what technology will look like.
 - Jess Vogt asks what technology Parks currently uses to manage trees. Cathy Breitenbach mentions Inform, which is a work-order system, not a tree system, but foresters enter their own work orders and close them. It is not spatial and lacks a lot of the features that would be ideal for managing trees.
 - Daniella Pereira asks about how much Parks and BoF have worked together to harmonize their processes. Cathy Breitenbach reports that they realized that it would be faster to go do separate RFPs but that they have been meeting and although there is no actual overlap in the trees to be inventoried, both inventories will collect a lot of the same fields because of the specifications of the grant that they got from the Morton Arboretum.
 - Sidebar: Cathy Breitenbach notes that 311 requests about parks do go to Parks eventually just a bit longer process to get to Parks.
 - Joe McCarthy notes that this inventory is part of the larger shift for the City from reactive to proactive management and that there will be
 - Jim Simelka relates the story of the City of Chicago Heights from having no urban forestry program at all to being a proactive manager of urban trees in 3 years. Yes, he acknowledges the scale difference between that small town and this one,
 - Jess Vogt acknowledges the hard work that has been
 - Daniella Pereira clarifies that this is a city-wide inventory (Joe McCarthy: yes) and asks about the engagement of equity neighborhoods. Joe McCarthy responds that it's in the management plan process that Tree Ambassadors and local communities will be involved, especially in the equity areas.
 - Parks and the City (BoF/CDOT) will each get their own Management Plan for trees. However, there will be collaboration expected during the community engagement process to create a management plan for the City, especially with parks advisory councils as conveners.
 - Cathy Breitenbach notes the challenge that Parks will have in tree location because park trees don't have addresses the same way street trees can, so they are also facing challenges with a robust locational tracking system for the trees in parks during inventory and then beyond.
- Tree Removal Update – Joe McCarthy
 - There have been 5,550 removals this calendar year for the City as a whole BoF (inclusive of CDOT streets because CDOT does not do any of their own removals).
 - There is discussion of whether these numbers can be broken down by alder or water department requests versus dead trees, or how many are weather-related with more emergency days than usual. BoF does not have this breakdown available.

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- Angela Tovar clarifies with Malcolm Whiteside that there were about 150 trees affected in last night's winds.

- Discretionary Removal Letter Update – Ald. Maria Hadden/Leslie Perkins
 - Leslie Perkins summarizes the progress to date. A letter that was discussed and approved during the last meeting was sent to Mayor Johnson asking him to end the ability of alderpersons to request discretionary tree removals. Included in this letter was a packet of information further detailing the historical context of discretionary removals and a form allowing alders to participate in a process for trees being inspected in place of automatically removed. Discretionary removals had been allocated under Mayor Richard M. Daley, giving alders 20 removals per year in their ward. UFAB delivered the letter on October 18, 2024 and have acknowledge receipt. Leslie suggests revisiting this issue in the New Year.
 - Malcolm Whiteside thanks the board for being behind this issue, which has been a 19-year problem.
- Our Roots Chicago Update – Grace Adams, Information Coordinator with CDPH
 - Grace Adams acknowledges the Our Roots staffing transition and reviewing the needs of this program within the department and how they work with other departments.
 - Next Tree Equity Working Group meeting is coming up on this coming Tuesday, December 10, 9 am. These are virtual meetings, completely open to anyone but you need the link. Email Grace Adams to be added to the list and get the link and agenda emailed to you regularly.
 - Jess Vogt clarifies that Our Roots will continue to be on the UFAB agenda as a standing item going forward.

6. Working Group Reports

- Education Working Group Update – Rolando Favela, *in absentia (via email)*
 - Rolando Favela's report (sent via email to UFAB) is read by Jess Vogt: "The Education Working Group [EWG] has made progress on the development of printed materials and we [EWG] now have a clear vision for how we [EWG] want to present these resources. However, we have outstanding questions about funding for production and distribution. Specifically, we [EWG] would like to ask the board for guidance for whether we [EWG] can pursue funding from the City for these materials, or, alternatively, if the group can fundraise independently to cover costs. Additionally, we [EWG] would like to encourage the board and members of the public to join Education Working Group Meetings. Increased attention and participation would greatly enhance our efforts, providing diverse perspectives and input to refine strategies."
 - Leslie Perkins notes that this issue with the funding isn't a perennial one because UFAB doesn't currently live under any particular department.
 - Angela Tovar notes that perhaps the Department of Environment can print materials. EWG may follow-up with her.

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- Policy/Landscape Ordinance Working Group – Daniella Pereira
 - Daniella Pereira gave a slide presentation (see Attachment 4: SLIDE DECK: Updating Chicago’s Landscape Ordinance: A Vision for Enhancing the Urban Forest – *slide numbers referenced parenthetically in italics below*) and provided a handout to UFAB Members (Attachment 5: HANDOUT: Recommendations for Updating Planting Standards) on behalf of the Policy/Landscape Ordinance Working Group.
 - (*Slides 2-3*) Daniella Pereira started with an overview of the process of the Policy/Landscape Ordinance (LO) Working Group, which included monthly LO Working Group meetings on off months from UFAB meetings. Daniella Pereira highlighted how important the support from Openlands Policy Associate Alma Olavarria-Gallegos, who has been conducting a lot of one-on-one meetings with BoF staff to gather information to support the findings Daniella Pereira presented.
 - (*Slide 4*) An important distinction to note is that what is referred to colloquially as the “landscape ordinance” is actually two parts of municipal Code (Chapter 17-11 and Chapter 10-32) plus a Landscape Guide, a 60-page PDF document published in year 2000 that is the guiding document that designers and developers use when implementing the Landscape Ordinance municipal code.
 - (*Slide 7*) Daniella Pereira emphasized the “Vision for the Urban Forest” that the LO Working Group spent some significant time developing as their “north star” to guide their activities in revising the ordinance. This vision statement is:

“Chicago envisions a robust, thriving tree canopy within its urban landscape, mitigating climate change, enhancing life expectancy, improving quality of life, and weaving together connectivity and biodiversity.

“The City recognizes that collective comprehensive stewardship and maximization of its urban landscape, parkways and green spaces is necessary to achieve this vision. This approach nurtures a sense of place and acknowledges the deep interconnection between the health of people, plants, animals, and our shared environment.”
 - (*Slides 8-10*) Daniella Pereira then went through the planting standards updates the LO Working Group would like to propose. See the attachment with the full slide deck from the presentation as well as the handout with proposed changes for details.
 - Leslie Perkins highlights that although the proposed changes are “small tweaks” the LO Working Group has done a lot of excellent work proposing 14 areas of specific updates to municipal code, which is really important. Daniella Pereira agrees and adds that there are more changes that they would like to propose.
 - (*Slide 11*) Leslie Perkins says that next steps for enacting this is to draft an ordinance for introduction into the Environmental Committee. The committee then distributes this to Intergovernmental Affairs who will disseminate to all the impacted City Departments for their feedback and

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review. During the Environmental Committee meeting(s) at which these ordinances will be discussed, people can sign up for public comment during to support the changes. UFAB should also write a letter of support for the changes.

- Daniella Pereira asks about a timeline for development of an ordinance; Leslie Perkins says that Environmental Committee meetings are not scheduled yet. She would expect fairly easy passage as the proposed changes are essentially planting standards and with UFAB support, it should be an easy City Council vote, hopefully.
- Angela Tovar says that it will be important to get specific stakeholders on board including and especially Dept of Planning and Development since much of the LO is under Zoning purview. Discussion ensues of who in particular it would be critical to have a pre-meeting with and the following list of stakeholders is developed: Cierra Boatwright (Commissioner DPD) and Ron Daye in Planning (who has already been in Landscape Ordinance Working Group Meetings), Cole Stallard (Commissioner Streets and Sanitation), and Tom Carney (Commissioner Transportation)
- *(Slide 12)* Daniella Pereira poses several discussion questions to the board, many of which center on the ability to pursue funding and grant opportunities to hire a consultant to pursue a comprehensive review and develop improved materials with these changes (such as the new Landscape Guide).
 - Questions are posed about whether UFAB itself can go after grant opportunities, which Jess Vogt notes would be difficult given the incompatibility of UFAB’s quarterly meetings and grant RFPs with often 60-day turnarounds.
 - Joe McCarthy notes that historically, DPD has taken the lead on proposals like this so perhaps UFAB can propose this to DPD during the meeting.
 - Daniella Pereira asks about the possibility of an independent organization like Openlands getting a grant to work in tandem with the City on this; consensus among City staff is that, yes, this could be fine and faster.
- Daniella Pereira poses a question of how to improve enforcement capacity.
 - Leslie Perkins notes the challenges with this at present are personnel/capacity and budget-related and says that coming back to this at UFAB in March-April 2025 then BoF can make it a budget request in the July 2025 budget discussions for 2026. Revenue-generating positions are exempt from hiring freezes so asking for a new enforcement position would be possible.
- Leslie Perkins also brings up more broadly the issues of where Bureau of Forestry lives: “Where does it makes sense for Forestry to live? Does it make sense for it to live in the same place that handles snow plowing and garbage removal? Or does it makes sense to live in the place that is

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responsible for our Climate Action Plan?” Leslie Perkins suggests that this should be an agenda item for future meetings.

- Angela Tovar notes that the issue with this is that yes, it makes sense conceptually, but that DOE has “no infrastructure” to meet the logistical needs of the Bureau of Forestry – no fleet, no warehouse, no vehicles. Angela Tovar notes that because they are building a Department of Environment from the ground up there are substantial logistical issues of moving staff and responsibilities from other places to Environment. They are starting to work with the CCA, Civic Consulting Alliance a pro bono consulting group about capacities and resources of DOE.
 - Malcolm Whiteside provides some historical context here: When Suzanne Malec-McKenna was Commissioner of Environment there was substantial reorganization and questions about whether Forestry could go to the Department of Environment, but then unfortunately Environment got dissolved.
 - Joe McCarthy mentions that the number one service provided by Forestry at present is like a garbage service: woody debris pick up. It would be easier to get rid of this if they weren’t located in Streets and Sanitation.
 - Joe McCarthy notes that next spring there will be a collaborative training with CDOT on how to minimize damage to trees during construction and train CDOT staff on how to recognize tree problems since they are already “out on the street.”
- *(Slide 13)* Daniella Pereira turns the conversations back to the three voting questions from the Landscape Ordinance Working Group:
 - (1) Does UFAB support exploring seeking funding for furthering the development of the new LO guide reflecting the proposed changes?
 - (2) Is there reapproval to engage additional stakeholders in the process? Specifically, Daniella Pereira mentions the Native Garden Registry Advisory Board and Office of Underground Coordination (part of CDOT) as important additional stakeholders to involve in continuing LO Working Group discussions.
 - (3) Should UFAB LO Working Group prioritize specific policy areas for immediate action?
 - Angela Tovar notes that without DPD present, UFAB shouldn’t vote formally on these items because they are a crucial stakeholder and while likely won’t oppose any of these issues, it is better to wait until they are present to vote. Others agree.
 - Joe McCarthy notes that there are additional questions about soil volume, structural cells, and other below-ground issues that need to be resolved. Daniella Pereira answers that yes, this is why Underground
 - There is general assent among UFAB members for yes on items 1-3 is given; no one specifically objects. But no formal vote is held.
 - Angela Tovar notes that the challenge here is timing: updating the LO ordinance text at the same time as updating the LO guide document (which

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is a PDF that is a copy of a very bold physical, printed document) is challenging.

- Daniella Pereira acknowledges the chicken-and-egg problem where the ordinance refers to the guide, but without funding to update the LO guide, updating the ordinance is futile. So far, the LO Working Group has focused on all kinds of policy/ordinance changes but moving forward, Daniella Pereira suggests they will take into account that the guide will not be immediately updated. Thus, isolating the changes that can be made to ordinance that do not reference the guide will be an important first step and LO changes that refer to the guide can happen next.
- Leslie Perkins notes that she can use Adobe Acrobat to update the PDF guide from 2000 but would need time and people to help. UFAB consensus is that it would be far better to modernize the guide and do a new one.
- Angela Tovar notes that DPD just went through a huge process for their Sustainable Development Policy update/planning process, including hiring a consultant. Perhaps they would be a good source to ask how this went and what the budget was and so on.

7. New Business

- Proposed changes to UFAB logistics for 2025 – Jess Vogt /Daniella Pereira
 - Jess Vogt goes through a few proposed logistical changes to procedures for UFAB operations as a sort of stock-taking exercise after our first full year of meetings and Working Groups. See Attachment 5: HANDOUT: Proposed changes to UFAB logistics for 2025 for an overview of these proposed changes. This document resulted from discussions between Jess Vogt, Daniella Pereira, and Alma Olvarria-Gallegos, Openlands Policy Associate.
 - Jess Vogt highlights the proposed use of a Consent Agenda for getting tree numbers submitted before meetings and then cleared as a single item at the top, saving more discussion time for substantive issues. No one objects and UFAB will begin implementing this in the new year.
 - Leslie Perkins notes, and Sean Weidel agrees, that the Law department will have to look at several of these items, especially with respect to board membership and voting. Further, many of these questions would be solved by bylaws, which UFAB does not have, but should get. Ideally, there are existing by-laws of another City board or commission somewhere that UFAB could modify to their purposes.
 - Getting bylaws and clarifying UFAB procedures is agreed upon as an action item for 2025.
 - Daniella Pereira notes that with respect to item 2 on the handout about the formal responsibilities of board members versus delegates is crucial. It is desirable to figure out a mechanism by which Commissioners can still be formal members but that for quorum and voting purposes, Deputies can serve. “The hope is that Commissioners do come to this meeting. ...I

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understand that Deputy Commissioners [who have been attending UFAB meetings all year] do a lot of work and take on actions...but we want to hold the commissioners accountable” and encourage them to attend UFAB whenever possible.

- Right now, it’s noted that the delegates (Deputy Commissioners or staff representatives of the listed board members from City departments and Chicago Parks District) do not officially count for quorum. An update to the UFAB ordinance would be required to make delegates count for quorum. Leslie Perkins and Angela Tovar will work on getting this “or their designee” line into the Management Ordinance passing through City Council this week.
- Jess Vogt goes through the proposed list of board member responsibilities (items 2.c.i-v), no objections are raised but law review is requiring before formalizing.
- Item 3 voting procedures need law review.
- Regarding item 5 the frequency of meetings, Leslie Perkins and Angela Tovar, who know the ordinance best, agree that yes, UFAB, if desired, can increase the frequency of full board meetings without violating ordinance. Jess Vogt queries the board about the possibility of going to an every-other month meeting schedule. Sean Weidel proposes then shortening meetings to 90 minutes. Jess Vogt notes that a consent agenda would help with shortening meetings.
 - Angela Tovar asks about what UFAB hopes to achieve with more frequent meetings and how this would affect the Working Group structure.
 - Jess Vogt acknowledges that if Working Groups only continue to meet on off months, this would reduce WG time.
 - Daniella Pereira notes that the LO Working Group needs decisions to be made and UFAB full board meetings is the place and body to make decisions. Ability to e-vote would reduce the need for full board meetings, currently the only venue where votes happen.
 - Daniella Pereira suggests doing every other month but taking out the summer months meetings to still only have 4 or 5 per year.
 - Leslie Perkins notes that this maybe is a discussion for the new year.
- Regarding the timing of meetings, Jess Vogt reports hearing via email from forestry/CDOT staff that mornings work better. Consensus emerges that a 9:30 – 11 am would work best, so let’s try this for February meeting.
- Daniella Pereira makes a request for calendar invites for meetings. Angela Tovar says she can fill that gap.
- Jess Vogt says that we need a single point person with website posting power: This is Department of Streets and Sanitation and Mimi Simon.
- Regarding the place, UFAB would like to continue to meet in City Hall, ideally this Room 1103.

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- 2025 UFAB meeting dates:
 - Confirmed: February 6, 2025 – 9:30-11 am – room will be confirmed but likely 1103 or 300B
 - Tentative meeting dates (*to be confirmed at the Feb 2025 UFAB meeting*):
 - April 3, 2025 9:30-11 am
 - June 5, 2025 9:30-11 am
 - (if needed) August 7, 2025 9:30-11 am
 - (if needed) October 2, 9:30-11 am
 - December 4, 2025, 9:30-11 am
 - Policy/Landscape Ordinance and Education Working Groups will meet first Thursdays of off months (January, March, May, July, September, November), or as needed, at TBD time and place.
- Closing thanks for Malcolm Whiteside’s leadership:
 - Angela Tovar, on behalf of herself and UFAB, expressed her profound gratitude to Malcolm Whiteside for his years of leadership and friendship and wished him well in his retirement.

Meeting is adjourned at 4:15 pm.

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Attachment 1: PUBLIC COMMENT from Save Your Ash Chicago

Delivered by Nancy Wade on behalf of herself and Ashley Woodthorp, Co-Chairs of Save Your Ash Chicago.

Trees are our first defenders in arming ourselves against the ongoing climate chaos. What are the most serious consequences of climate chaos that threaten human life and wellbeing in Chicago? Unprecedented flooding, heat waves, and periodic significant degrading of air quality. **Trees are the most effective and least expensive mechanism** there is for combatting these challenges.

That means the Bureau of Forestry is the most important part of city government.

The Bureau of Forestry is defending Chicagoans' very ability to live in our great city.

UFAB is composed of dedicated, knowledgeable public servants and crusaders for environmental justice and defense of a liveable Chicago. We strongly encourage us all to take on a larger vision of what this body and the Bureau of Forestry can and must be.

We urge all of us to deeply take to heart the crucial role BOF plays in the very survival of Chicago. The structure of our city government puts BOF under Streets and Sanitation. This reflects the historical view of trees as utilities; similar to pipes, roads, garbage trucks and disposal bins. This has contributed to an historic approach of trees being expendable, replaceable, and of far less value than these other non-living city assets.

We now know that BOF is the defender of our first defenders against climate chaos; our publicly shared Urban Forest.

It is vital to the well-being of Chicago that this fundamental mission for the Bureau of Forestry be elevated: that BOF be fully funded to pursue and carry out essential environmental projects such as, saving our city ash trees, continuing to care for saplings planted through the five years or more years, not two, they will need to survive, educating residents about the essential role of the Urban Forest in defense against climate chaos, and more.

At minimum, an achievable goal of renaming the Bureau of Forestry the

Chicago Urban Forest Defenders and Protectors

would be a start at changing attitudes and educating Chicagoans about the essential role in our well-being this organization plays.

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Attachment 2: PUBLIC COMMENT from Openlands TreeKeepers

Delivered by Tom Ebeling on behalf of Openlands TreeKeepers and other community members

Good afternoon everyone,

My name is Tom Ebeling and I am the program manager for Community Forestry at Openlands, which includes overseeing the TreeKeepers program.

Since the creation of the UFAB, Openlands staff receives frequent feedback about the meetings because many of the community members who consistently attend are TreeKeepers who serve as “the eyes and ears of the Urban Forest”. We at Openlands wanted to take this opportunity at the years end to formally collect those thoughts and share them with the full board. In order to do so, we sent out a survey asking for feedback about TreeKeepers’ experience with the past year of UFAB.

The survey asked why folks are interested in participating, where they saw room for improvement and what their recommendations would be going forward. The responses also held a lot of praise for the current work being done, which I will also highlight at the end. I hope that these comments can be used to implement structural improvements that can support the work that each board member has been tasked with. I am speaking today on Behalf of those TreeKeepers and other community members who responded to the survey.

The primary concerns of this group were related to communication gaps, inconsistencies among the working groups and accessibility issues, which we have summarized:

- Agendas and meeting minutes are often not timely, detailed or accessible.
- There is a lack of communication about meeting logistics or updates.
- There is not a good mechanism for non TreeKeeper participants to register for the meetings.
- The Education working group seems to face challenges with clear deliverables, infrequent meetings and location consistency.
- The Policy Working group seems to face challenges with clear direction.
- There are no remote or hybrid meeting options available.
- Meeting times and locations are inconvenient for some who wish to participate.

While we received these major complaints, many also provided solutions they would like to see. To summarize the recommendations from respondents:

- Establish a dedicated webpage or hub for UFAB with easily accessible agendas, minutes and registration links.
- Provide virtual or hybrid meeting options and vary meeting scheduled for broader participation.
- Adopt better note-taking and agenda-setting practices for transparency, post them in a timely manner.
- Engage more actively with External stakeholders, such as council members and environmental organizations.
- Develop actionable plans, such as a city-wide strategy for watering newly planted trees.

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The respondents also had an abundance of praise for the work that is being done:

- UFAB meetings foster collaboration between city departments and effectively engage with members of the public.
- The meetings are welcoming and there is an abundance of open discussion, especially during the working group meetings.
- There are strong individual board members who contribute to keeping meetings productive and accountable to the public.

Our hope is that these comments can be used to help implement new structure and support and facilitate the incredible work that is already being done here. Please understand that these are honest thoughts from the people who should be served by this group. TreeKeepers and members of the public fought long and hard to see this board created and they simply desire effective, equitable and consistent practices that will help this body live up to its full potential.

Thank you all for your time and attention, but especially I want to thank you for your commitment to this extremely important work.

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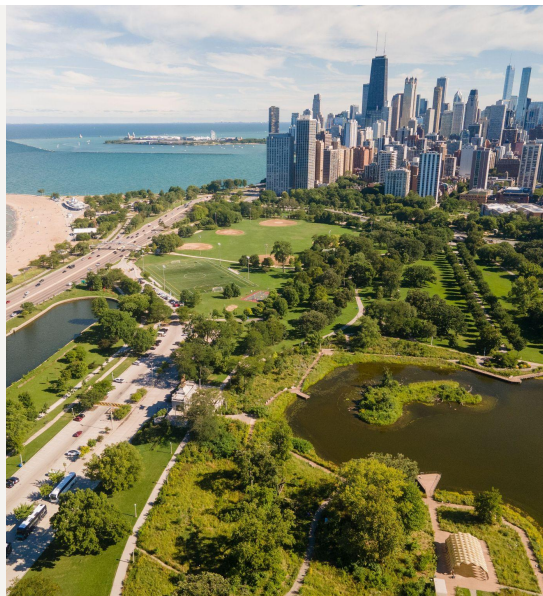
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Attachment 3: SLIDE DECK: Updating Chicago's Landscape Ordinance: A Vision for Enhancing the Urban Forest



Purpose

- Overview of efforts to update Chicago's Landscape Ordinance (LO)
- Highlight the need for updates
- Outline the process and next steps
- Discussion Questions
- Votes for Moving Forward



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Policy Working Group Overview

Task

Develop recommendations for updating the Landscape Ordinance and related policies

Meeting Schedule

Met monthly on months when the full UFAB Board did not meet. Schedule on [City website](#). Meetings are from 1-3 pm, are posted [publicly](#), and announced at Tree Equity Working Group Meetings.

People Involved

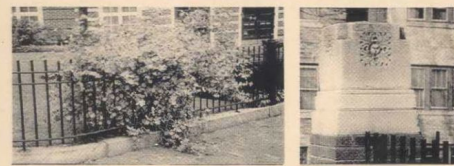
- Senior Forester from Bureau of Forestry (DSS)
- Senior Forester from Chicago Department of Transportation
- Chief Landscape Plan Examiner from Bureau of Zoning (DPD)
- Asst. Director of Landscape from Chicago Park District
- Director of Environmental Innovation from Department of Public Health
- Chief of Staff and Policy Director of 49th Ward
- Engaged Community Members, NFPs

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Why update the Landscape Ordinance holistically?

- Key Reasons:
 - Outdated resources that are difficult to access (e.g., only available as PDFs)
 - Last significant updates were decades ago
 - Urban forest dynamics have changed significantly over the past 20-30 years
 - New ideas and best practices need to be integrated



GUIDE TO THE CHICAGO LANDSCAPE ORDINANCE

*Regulations and guidelines relating to Title 10, Chapter 32 and
Title 17, Chapter 194A of the Chicago Municipal Code*



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Working Group Progress

First Year (2024)

- Review of Trees and Shrub Ordinance
- Review of Landscape Ordinance
- Creation of LO Vision
- Gathering and mapping Landscape Ordinance related goals from previous plans and discussions
- Identification of first Priority Issue Area
- Draft recommendations for first Priority Issue Area

City Plans Referenced:

- Urban Forest Management Plan (2023)
- Delivering Tree Equity in Chicago – Bloomberg Associates (2022)
- We Will Chicago (Draft 2022)
- Chicago Climate Action Plan (2022)

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Vision for the Urban Forest

Policy Working Group Vision Statement - Draft

Chicago envisions a robust, thriving tree canopy within its urban landscape, mitigating climate change, enhancing life expectancy, improving quality of life, and weaving together connectivity and biodiversity.

The City recognizes that collective comprehensive stewardship and maximization of its urban landscape, parkways and green spaces is necessary to achieve this vision. This approach nurtures a sense of place and acknowledges the deep interconnection between the health of people, plants, animals, and our shared environment.

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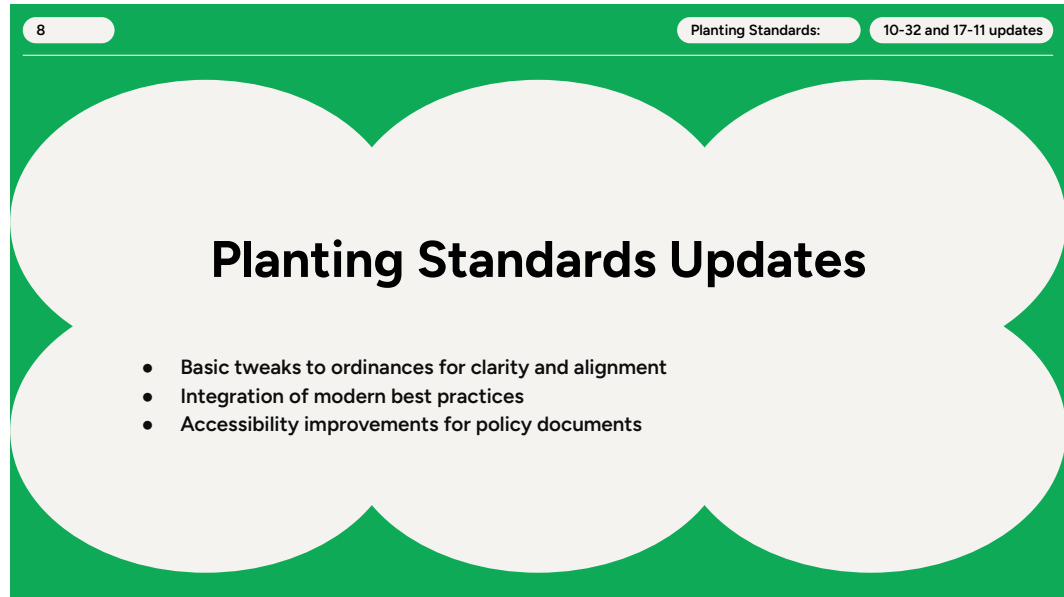
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Planting Standards: 10-32 and 17-11 updates

Planting Standards Updates

- Basic tweaks to ordinances for clarity and alignment
- Integration of modern best practices
- Accessibility improvements for policy documents



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Planting Standards Updates (1)

- Remove requirements for larger tree caliper standards within the Central Business District (CBD) and allow BoF to require varying tree calipers depending on location.
- Remove requirements for curbs and low railings around trees in the Central Area but allow them to be required if needed.
- Explore the possibility of Include a fee-in-lieu requirement for developments who are not able to meet the planting standards.
- Remove requirements for tree grates but allow if needed while requiring maximum landscaped area.
- Allow for more expansive types of ground cover around trees and define them.
- Reduce required soil depth for tree planting to align with current best practice.

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Planting Standards Updates (2)

- Increase required soil volume for tree planting by maximizing the landscape area.
- Require planting below elevated rail where appropriate
- Require planting in areas where minimum soil depth is achievable, where appropriate.
- Amend adjustments to remove non landscape options.
- Add a requirement for anyone subject to the Landscape Ordinance to adhere to the Bureau of Forestry's Manual of Tree Planting and Tree Pruning Standards.
- Increase height requirements for native and pollinator gardens in parkways. - (to be reviewed by Native & Pollinator Garden Registry Board)
- Include a requirement for anyone subject to the Landscape Ordinance to adhere to a national standard like the American Nursery Stock Standards Z60.1 or ANSI A300 standards.
- Add requirements for the minimum amount of soil volume needed when replacing sidewalks. - (To be reviewed by Office of Underground Coordination on how to recognize soil systems as infrastructure)

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Planting Standard next steps

- Identify key areas for immediate updates
- Seek funding for consultant support to ensure a holistic approach
- Develop a timeline for policy revision and implementation

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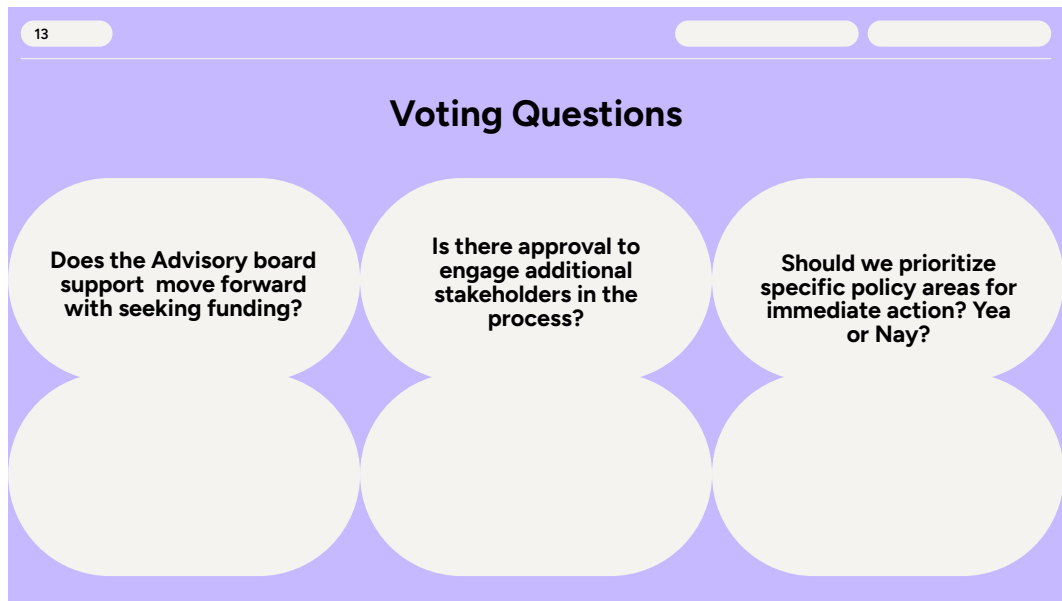
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Board Discussion

- How can we improve enforcement of existing and updated policies?
- Can enforcement be tied to funding new positions for urban forest management?
- Will the Advisory Board support funding efforts or initiatives to hire a consultant?
- What role should this Board play in advocating for these changes?



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Voting Questions

- Does the Advisory board support move forward with seeking funding?
- Is there approval to engage additional stakeholders in the process?
- Should we prioritize specific policy areas for immediate action? Yea or Nay?

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Attachment 4: HANDOUT: DRAFT Recommendations for Updating Planting Standards

Provided as a draft by the UFAB Policy/Landscape Ordinance Working Group

Recommendations for Updating Planting Standards
December 5, 2024

Background

The Urban Forestry Advisory Board (UFAB) Policy Working Group convened to review the Landscape Ordinance. The Landscape Ordinance is expansive and often refers to other codes. The Working Group determined the first priority area to be updating tree planting standards to meet best practices. The working group continues to meet to address other elements of the Landscaping Ordinance.

UFAB has reviewed Municipal Code 10-32-220, 17-11-0103, and associated codes and produced preliminary recommendations. Each recommendation below includes a brief narrative explanation.

Recommendations

The Guide to the Chicago Landscape Ordinance that was last reviewed over 24 years ago in 2000. UFAB has determined revisions are required to the Guide. To reflect new best practices, mitigate the effects of climate change, enhance life expectancy, improve quality of life, and weave together connectivity and biodiversity, the **UFAB recommends the City hire a contractor to revise the Guide to the Chicago Landscape Ordinance and harmonize it with other city standards** in partnership with Bureau of Forestry (BoF), Bureau of Zoning, Chicago Department of Transportation (CDOT), the Department of Environment, the Green Stormwater Infrastructure Group and UFAB.

Below please find the recommendations for Municipal Code 10-32-220, 17-11-0103, and associated sections:

- 1) Remove requirements for larger tree caliper standards within the Central Business District (CBD) and allow BoF to require varying tree calipers depending on location.**
Tree caliper, which is measured at a standard height for the diameter of the trunk, is a controlled requirement in our current ordinance. Smaller caliper trees establish in less time, are less expensive, and experience less shock during transplant.

These benefits must be balanced with ensuring new trees can withstand vandalism, an urban environment, and a warming climate. Historically, the Central Area has been required to plant 4-inch caliper trees to beautify the area, as a larger tree provides more visual impact. However, larger trees take longer to establish and have a larger price tag, subjecting developments to larger fees.

Given these considerations, we recommend removing the requirement for 4-inch caliper trees within the Central Area. Instead, allow the BoF to require planting trees within a range of

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DRAFT Recommendations for Updating Planting Standards – page 2

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minimum caliper, as they deem necessary based on site conditions. If desired, a 4-inch caliper tree will be permitted.

2) Remove requirements for curbs and low railings around trees in the Central Area but allow them to be required if needed.

This recommendation aims to maximize tree health, maximize tree maturation, and increase stormwater capture. At grade (curbless) continuous planters are the preferred infrastructure to achieve these goals because the tree planting area will be level with the ground around it. At grade planters allow unrestricted water movement into the tree planting area whereas curbed planters restrict and reduce stormwater from entering these sites. These preferred planters allow greater water absorption into the soil and tree roots away from sewers. Low railings or curbs may still be required in some areas and will be based on updates around the Guide to the Chicago Landscape Ordinance.

3) Explore the possibility of Include a fee-in-lieu requirement for developments who are not able to meet the planting standards.

The City of Chicago has inequitable life expectancy outcomes throughout the city. Increased canopy cover has been linked to better health outcomes and trees have the added benefits of helping reduce flooding, increasing property value, and reducing cost of utilities. For the purpose of supporting a robust and thriving tree canopy, a fee-in-lieu program provides funds for the infrastructure changes necessary to elevate all neighborhoods to areas that can healthily maintain large trees and their root systems.

4) Remove requirements for tree grates but allow if needed while requiring maximum landscaped area.

Tree grates help protect the tree root zone from compaction and vandalism. However, as trees grow radially, the tree grate must be expanded and or removed to prevent premature mortality. Removing the requirement for tree grates ensures parkway trees will live unimpeded, reduces unnecessary dead tree removal costs, and eases long term tree care. Tree grates may still be required in some projects where they may be used to maximize the landscaped area.

5) Allow for more expansive types of ground cover around trees and define them.

Currently, there are written requirements for the use of lava rocks and mulch around trees. Expanding definitions and clarifying the allowance of low growing, non-invasive plants (as defined by the City and the State) provides more unique functioning landscapes that increases biodiversity and maximizes stormwater capture. This recommendation positions Chicago as a future green city that strategically uses green infrastructure for emerging issues.

6) Increase height requirements for native and pollinator gardens in parkways.

Currently, native and pollinator gardens may not exceed 10 inches in the parkway. As many plants native to our region often grow significantly higher, the current requirements unnecessarily limit establishment of pollinator and storm gardens. To harmonize the fifth recommendation (see above) across the City, and to encourage successful green stormwater projects in our City, the height maximums for non-tree plants in parkways can be increased.

7) Reduce required soil depth for tree planting to align with current best practice.

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DRAFT Recommendations for Updating Planting Standards – page 3

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.

8) Increase required soil volume for tree planting by maximizing the landscape area.

In general, our healthiest, largest and most mature trees provide the most benefits to us. City trees face adverse conditions like increased heat loads, road salt, and pedestrian and vehicular interference. The most significant challenge that urban trees face is suitable soil volume for root growth and tree maturation. By increasing the soil volume, we improve the projected lifespan of a tree and help ensure we are maximizing the benefits from our urban forest. We aim to maximize the landscaped areas within the city to ensure maximum root space and soil space for water absorption.

9) Add requirements for the minimum amount of soil volume needed when replacing sidewalks.

Compacted earth and rockfill are prevalent in Chicago and leads to premature mortality, tree decline, and poor tree health. A requirement for minimum soil volume during sidewalk construction allows trees greater growing space and diminishes the aforementioned negative effects. This requirement can be fulfilled in multiple ways, through soil cells, the addition of structural soil, or other means depending on the area.

10) Add a requirement for anyone subject to the Landscape Ordinance to adhere to the Bureau of Forestry's Manual of Tree Planting and Tree Pruning Standards.

11) Include a requirement for anyone subject to the Landscape Ordinance to adhere to a national standard like the American Nursery Stock Standards Z60.1 or ANSI A300 standards.

The American National Standards Institute A300 Tree Care standards is the tree care industry standard of care in the USA. This recommendation is to ensure proper establishment, care, and maintenance of the city's urban infrastructure. Trees are an essential part of our urban infrastructure and they may carry some risk, like all infrastructure does, so adhering to the most up to date standards is crucial. ANSI A300 standards are developed on consensus performance standards based on current research and sound practice.

12) Require planting below elevated rail where appropriate.

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.

13) Require planting in areas where minimum soil depth is achievable, where appropriate.

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 is necessary. Requirements for minimum depth for tree planting can be aligned with industry standards. Requiring tree plantings where appropriate allows our urban forest canopy to be strengthened.

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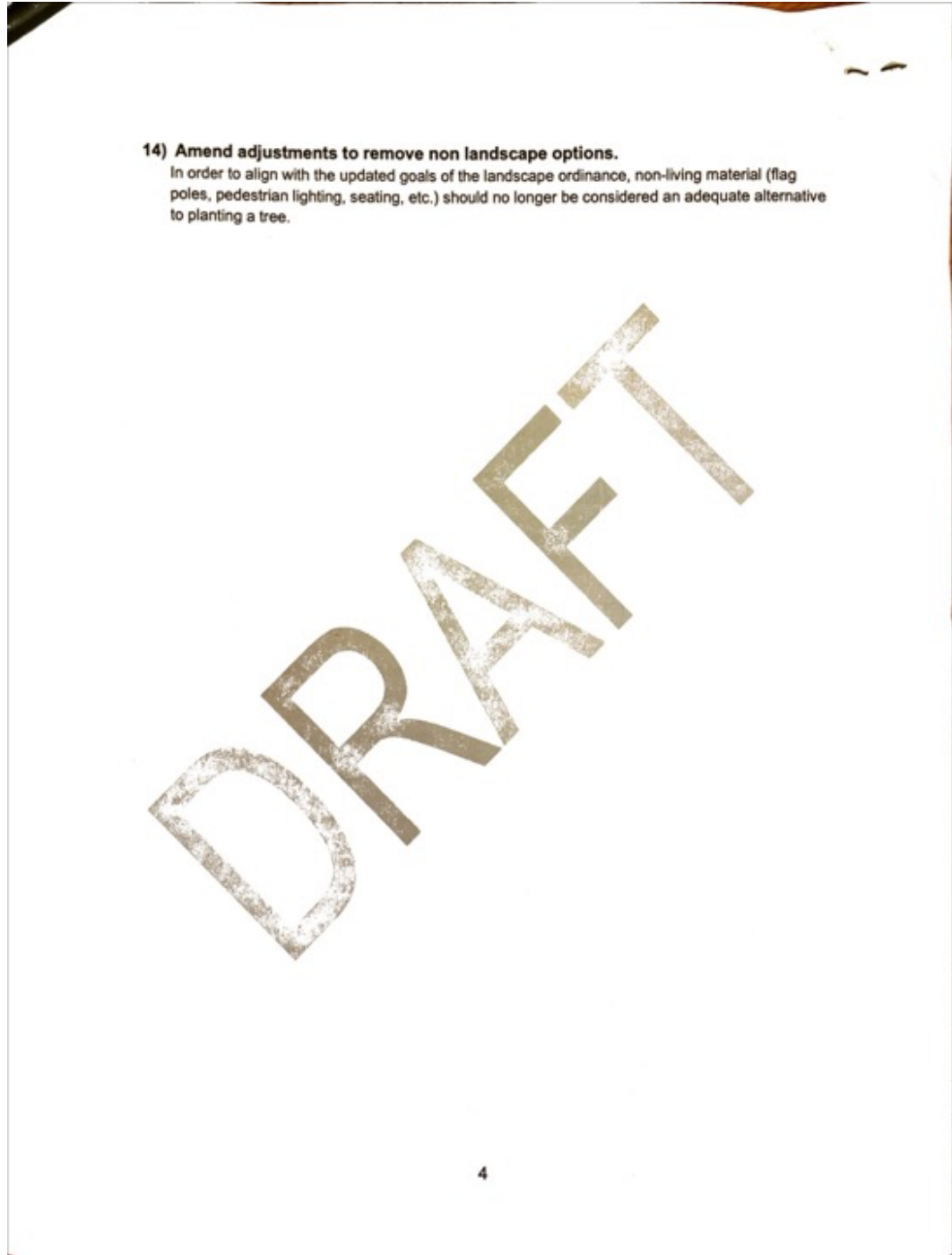
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DRAFT Recommendations for Updating Planting Standards – page 4



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Attachment 5: HANDOUT: Proposed Logistical Changes to UFAB for 2025+

Proposed to UFAB by board members Jess Vogt and Daniella Pereira, with input from Openlands staff member Alma Olavarria Gallegos

After one full calendar year of meetings for the Chicago Urban Forest Advisory Board, established in late 2021, there are some logistical improvements we would like to suggest be made to the Board's operations.

1. Use of a Consent Agenda for quick updates, esp. numeric updates.

- a. Number of trees removed, trees trimmed, trees planted, and other similar numeric updates (e.g., pest treatment numbers, inventory numbers).
- b. To be submitted to the UFAB President/Vice President 2 weeks prior to Full Board meetings for printing in the Agenda.
- c. These will be published at the top of the Agenda and not discussed except in the event of corrections.

There will still be opportunity on the Agenda to discuss questions from the Board about tree-related activities more substantively; collecting all numbers will just save us the time of reading and repeating these out, and publication in the Agenda will enable more timely notice of the general public of these activities.

2. Expectations of board members to be clarified.

- a. **Use of Proxies:** UFAB Members may delegate voting responsibilities to another voting member as Proxy via use of a Proxy form (written, signed documentation of their intended vote).
- b. **Use of Delegates:** UFAB Members may send a Delegate in their place to participate in the meeting. Delegates may count for quorum at Full Board meetings.
- c. **Responsibilities of Board Members:**
 - i. **President:** Leads Full Urban Forestry Advisory Board Meetings. Works with the Vice President and UFAB membership to set a meeting agenda for Full Board Meetings.
 - ii. **Vice President:** Leads the President and UFAB membership in setting a meeting agenda for Full Board Meetings, to be finalized 2 weeks prior to the next meeting.

Any need for votes should be included in the Agenda in case a proxy vote will be needed.
 - iii. **Secretary:** Takes detailed, official meeting minutes, to be circulated via email to the entire UFAB membership *no later than 2 weeks prior to the next Full Board meeting.*
 - iii. **All other Board Members:** Attend (or send a Delegate, and/or Proxy form for any votes) all Full Board Meetings. Contribute to Working Groups as available and appropriate.

Regular attendance at at least half(?) of the annual meetings is expected of Board Members. If you are unable to attend, please notify the President and Vice President as soon as possible.

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v. **Delegates:** Identify themselves at the beginning of the meeting during roll call and then may participate as if a Board Member but voting can only be done by proxy form signed by the official voting board member.

d. **DISCUSSION:** *What are the obligations of UFAB members who do not attend multiple meetings in a row without prior notice?*

3. Voting Procedures

- a. Use of e-voting: Via email for issues that arise in between meetings.
- b. Clarification on voting rules: Majority of quorum passes any vote.

4. Funding opportunities

- a. **DISCUSSION:** *How can UFAB pursue funding opportunities or support the funding opportunities of others? Can e-voting on pursuing funding be used since grant timelines are often short?*

5. Frequency and timing of future meetings.

- a. Currently quarterly (4x per year), on
- b. **DISCUSSION:** *Can we move to bi-monthly (6x per year)? Does the standing 1st Thursday of the month from 2-4 pm work for all? Several members have missed many meetings recently. Do we need to change the time or day?*
- c. **DISCUSSION:** *Who is the single City point-person charged with sending calendar invites, booking meeting space, and posting agendas and meeting minutes?*

6. Working Groups.

- a. Currently two Working Groups: Education + Policy. Can create more as needed.
- b. As long as *fewer than 3 official Board Members (excludes Delegates) of UFAB* are present, Working Groups can meet as needed, via Zoom and in-person.
- c. Education Working Group: Formally charged with getting answers to questions that are posed during Public Comment period for answering during the next Full Board meeting.