

Wilmette Park District Awarded \$20,000 Urban and Community Forestry Grant to Enhance Local Tree Canopy

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Date: April 29, 2025

WILMETTE, IL— The Wilmette Park District has been awarded a \$20,000 Urban and Community Forestry Grant through The Morton Arboretum’s Chicago Region Trees Initiative (CRTI) in collaboration with the Illinois Department of Natural Resources and the USDA Forest Service Eastern Region. These funds will improve local biodiversity, increase tree canopy coverage, and establish a long-term tree preservation policy.

“This grant supports the Park District’s continued commitment to sustainability and ecological stewardship,” said Parks Planner Alissa Paquette. “We’re excited to expand our tree canopy, enhance visitor experiences, and create a more resilient, diverse urban forest for future generations.”

Over the next year, Wilmette Park District will remove seven invasive and hazardous Callery Pear trees and plant 93 new, primarily native, trees across public spaces. This project is more than just a replanting effort—it lays the groundwork for a board-approved urban forest management plan and a tree protection and preservation policy that will help guide responsible forestry practices through 2026 and beyond.

In the long term, this initiative aims to mitigate the urban heat island effect, provide shade for park visitors, and support the local ecosystem by improving aesthetics, increasing safety, and creating habitat for wildlife.

“Improving the distribution of trees and green spaces directly impacts the health and economic outcomes for communities,” said CRTI Director Zach Wirtz. “Projects like this improve quality of life and boost the urban tree canopy’s resilience to threats posed by environmental conditions, pests and diseases.”

The Illinois Department of Natural Resources and the USDA Forest Service provided funding for this project through the Urban and Community Forestry Program. The Morton Arboretum and USDA are equal opportunity providers and employers.

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