

The Year of the Tree in Springfield: 2020

Springfield Urban Forestry Commission

City of Springfield, Illinois
James O. Langfelder, Mayor

December 8, 2020



A Particularly Difficult Year

The Springfield Urban Forestry Commission (UFC) is pleased to share this report of its 2020 accomplishments and its plans for 2021. The year 2020 was a difficult one for cities and states across the country due to the pandemic, and especially problematic for the UFC, which had only been created in August 2019-- just months before the State implemented a stay-at-home order for public health reasons. Nevertheless, 2020 was an eventful and successful year. Operating with volunteer Commissioners and assistance from City personnel, specifically the City Arborist Jeffrey M. Reim, the UFC worked diligently during the year toward its mission of providing guidance to the City on management of our urban forest. Thanks to the teamwork of the City Arborist, the Public Works Department, volunteers, and the participating public, the UFC was able to enhance the City's natural beauty through good tree stewardship."

The Many Benefits of Trees and an Urban Forest

Trees provide many benefits to cities and their residents. Here are the top ten documented benefits of trees:

- Trees Tame Stormwater
- Trees Fight Climate Change
- Trees Fight Air Pollution
- Trees Can Save Energy
- Trees Provide Habitat for Wildlife
- Trees Add to Property Values
- Trees Can be an Economic Stimulus
- Trees Contribute to the Community's Physical/Mental Wellbeing
- Trees Provide Beauty and Privacy
- Trees Provide Neighborhood Security

UFC 2020 Accomplishments

- Development of Bylaws and Rules of Procedure, Appointment of a Chair, Vice-Chair, and Secretary;
- City Tree Planting in Fall/Winter 2019;
- Development of a Tree Plan;
- Revision (by the City Arborist) and approval of the Arboricultural Specifications Manual;
- Application for (by the City Arborist) and award of a Grant of 200 bare-root oak trees; in celebration of 2020 Arbor Day many were given to City residents to plant in their yard or parkway; and some were planted along Stanford Avenue;
- Advising City Arborist including regarding parkway Permits; graded downtown trees, and tree selection;
- Educational Activities/Programs: In January, Mike Brunk, the Urban Forestry Administrator at the Illinois Department of Natural Resources ("DNR") presented an educational program on Urban Forestry at the Lincoln Public Library; In February, Dr. McEuen gave a presentation at Lincoln Library about the value and care of trees;

- ❑ Development of a Website <http://www.springfield.il.us/UFC> (with the assistance of City personnel);
- ❑ Recommendation and began development of a Memorial Tree Planting Program;
- ❑ Submission of an Application for an Urban & Community Forestry Grant of up to \$20,000, through Morton Arboretum and the DNR, for a Tree Inventory;
- ❑ Notification that Springfield was ranked #1 in its region for the Morton Arboretum Grant for a Tree Inventory; the Grant is anticipated to cover the costs of a Tree Inventory of one quadrant of Springfield; Contractor bids are due to the Morton Arboretum on Monday, December 14th; and Morton Arboretum will make a decision regarding the size of the Grant based upon the bids, shortly thereafter;
- ❑ Submission of a Tree City USA application (prepared by the City Arborist);
- ❑ Submission of an Application (prepared by the City Arborist) for the Arbor Day Foundation “Tree City Growth Award”, which is awarded to communities that demonstrate higher levels of tree care and community engagement;
- ❑ Collaboration with the Land of Lincoln Community College Academy of Lifelong Learning for the Sangamon County Big Read, based on a Grant from the National Endowment for the Arts and featuring Lab Girl by Hope Jahren; and
- ❑ 2021 Arbor Day Event planning.

UFC 2021 Plans

- ❑ Planting 500 diverse trees throughout the City (Contractor/City Arborist);
- ❑ Conducting a Tree Inventory (Contractor) of one quadrant of the City with funds from Morton Arboretum/DNR Grant;
- ❑ Implementation of Tree Plan;
- ❑ Application for another tree grant, and, if successful, tree give away;
- ❑ March 31, Jan Von Qualen will be a speaker at the Big Read program, “Urban Trees: Planning, Policy, and Planting,” sponsored by the Citizens Club and the Center for State Policy and Leadership at the University of Illinois;
- ❑ April 2, the UFC will participate in the Big Read with the presentation of “Plant an Illinois Native Tree: Support a Food Chain,” by Dr. Amy McEuen ;
- ❑ April 27, Arbor Day Celebration at the Boys and Girls Club of Springfield;
- ❑ Implementation of a Memorial Tree Planting Program;
- ❑ Educational Programs; and
- ❑ Engagement of City Residents/Students in Tree Advocacy.

UFC 2021 Budget Request

The UFC remains passionate about the importance of the urban forest and dedicated to maintaining and improving it. The UFC is asking for a budget of \$125,000 to be used to purchase and plant 500 trees; to continue the quadrant-by-quadrant Tree Inventory, and to fund the Arbor Day and other forestry related events. The UFC is cognizant that the difficulties of 2020 have encompassed the entire City and will continue to affect the City throughout the 2021 Budget Year. The UFC will continue to take advantage of grant opportunities; will help the Forestry Division implement a memorial tree program; and will explore other methods of stretching the Forestry budget.

UFC Members

Jan Von Qualen, Chair

Amy McEuen, Vice-Chair

Rianne Hawkins, Secretary

Susan Allen

Randy Belville

Ernestine Lawrence

Jeffrey M. Reim, City Arborist (ex-officio/non-voting)

Nathan Bottom, Public Works Director (ex-officio/non-voting)

John Davis, General Manager of Public Utilities (ex-officio/non-voting)

