

Save Your Ash Coalition Chicago Statement

Save Chicago's Ash Trees - Save the City \$69 M

We strongly endorse ash tree conservation in Chicago. Ash tree conservation is a cost-effective, environmentally sound approach to maintaining a fundamental component of Chicago's green infrastructure. It has been used by the Bureau of Forestry from 2012 to 2018 to significantly reduce the rate of loss of Chicago's ash trees which represent a substantial portion of the urban tree canopy.

We support amending the 2022 City of Chicago budget so the Bureau of Forestry includes \$6 million for Emerald Ash Borer (EAB) ash tree treatments. Doing so will save the city \$69 M, which can be used to plant new saplings.

Ash trees are at risk of becoming infested by EAB and dying within the next few years if they continue to be left untreated for even another year.

Mayor Lightfoot's recently announced budget includes major spending — nearly \$200 million — on the environment and environmental justice issues, including a tree canopy equity expansion program that includes planting 75,000 trees over five years. We heartily support this proposal.

Mature trees are an essential ally in the fight against climate change. They sequester the greatest amount of carbon, purify the largest amount of air, and provide the greatest social benefits for citizens. Our green infrastructure can and must include both a diversity of newly planted trees as well as protection and maintenance of mature trees.

There are now an estimated 50,000 ash trees comprising more than 10% of Chicago's tree canopy. Their loss would have the most significant negative impact upon low income communities already lacking in tree canopy and subject to deadly heat islands and other environmental and social hazards as a result.

The good news is that saving the 50,000 mature ash trees in Chicago will in large part fund the planting of 75,000 saplings.

How saving ash trees funds planting saplings:

- 50,000 ash trees in Chicago Parkways 2021
- Cost of treating ash trees for three years : \$6 M or \$120 per tree
- Cost of removing and replacing: \$75 M or \$1,500 per tree
- Savings to Chicago: \$69 M
- Cost of planting 75,000 saplings: \$46 M

Treating the ash trees will provide savings of \$23 M more than the \$46 M needed to plant 75,000 saplings.

In summary, ash conservation in Chicago is far less costly than removal, especially when the significant environmental and economic benefits of established trees are considered. Furthermore, ash conservation can circumvent the substantial environmental impacts caused by wholesale deforestation of the urban landscape, as well as provide savings to plant new, diverse tree species.