

INFORMATION PAPER



February 28, 2024
Planning, Building and Development
Director Eric Waggoner

SUBJ: NATIVE TREE AND PLANT ZONING TEXT AMENDMENTS

Background:

In 2022, the Public Works, Planning and Transportation Committee directed staff to draft proposed ordinance amendments including modifying the Plant Materials list to remove invasive or disease-affected trees; adding trees that are either native or adapted to future climate conditions; reducing required minimum plant caliper width; and increasing species mix limits to ensure more biodiverse and resilient plantings. To help determine the feasibility of any corresponding amendments, Openlands was engaged to conduct a market analysis to evaluate if the nursery industry could accommodate potential amendments to the Landscaping Section of the Lake County, Illinois Code of Ordinances (Lake County Code). Openlands staff presented their research findings to the Planning, Building, Zoning and Environment Committee (PBZE) on January 10, 2024. Based on subsequent feedback from PBZE on various amendment concepts, staff has prepared and will present corresponding draft amendments for Committee discussion.

Proposed Amendments:

Based upon staff research and Openlands' recommendations, PBZE reached a consensus on the following draft amendment concepts:

- Refining the definition of "Native Plant Species";
- Adding an overall goal of supporting "ecological sustainability, stormwater management, and climate resilience";
- Reducing the required minimum caliper of canopy trees for tree replanting to ensure better transplant survival and long-term success; and
- Updating the Appendix A Plant Materials List to 1) remove invasive, disease-prone trees or trees not adaptable to evolving climate conditions, 2) add native trees and other native plants generally available locally.

The following draft amendment concepts to the Lake County Code were refined based on PBZE Committee discussion.

- Requiring that that 25% of the mandatory elements (canopy trees, evergreens, and shrubs) of a plant unit¹ be a native species; and
- Updating planting standards to limit a single species to no more than 15% of overall plant category (down from 40%) to help increase biodiversity.

Next Steps:

Following this presentation, staff will return to the PBZE Committee to seek action on a resolution to initiate the Zoning Board of Appeals public hearing process to consider the proposed text amendments to the Lake County Code.

¹ A plant unit is a measurement used to determine the quantity of plant material required. One plant unit is comprised of all of the following: 1 canopy tree; 2 understory trees; 2 evergreen trees; and 7 shrubs.