



Common Council Agenda Item

Meeting Date:	September 15, 2026
Agenda Item:	Application for WI DNR Urban Forestry Grant to Support Tree Inventory Project
Staff Contact (name, email, phone):	Kevin Boehm, kboehm@whitewater-wi.gov , 262-473-0122

BACKGROUND

(Enter the who, what when, where, why)

In 2025, the City retained McMahon Associates, Inc. to complete an operational assessment of the Public Works and Parks Department. One of the recommendations identified in the study was to update the City's public tree inventory and develop a systematic terrace tree pruning and replacement schedule. Staff subsequently began evaluating options for completing a comprehensive citywide GIS-based public tree inventory.

The proposed project would inventory public trees located within City-managed street rights-of-way, maintained areas of public parks, open spaces, and other municipal properties. The inventory would document existing trees, stumps, and available planting locations and provide information regarding tree location, species, size, condition, and management needs.

The City currently does not have a comprehensive and current inventory of its public tree population. Completion of the inventory would provide an accurate baseline for managing the City's urban forest and assist staff with identifying maintenance and removal priorities, evaluating species and age diversity, identifying future planting opportunities, developing systematic pruning cycles, planning for tree replacement, and forecasting long-term forestry maintenance and replacement costs.

The information collected through the inventory would also be incorporated into the City's existing Geographic Information System (GIS). This would provide the foundation for future GIS-based forestry asset management and work-order capabilities. The inventory could be maintained and updated as trees are planted, removed, inspected, or serviced, allowing the City to improve the long-term management and documentation of its urban forestry program.

The estimated cost to complete the citywide GIS public tree inventory is \$48,700. Staff has prepared an application for a Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources 2027 Urban Forestry Grant. The grant provides funding on a 50 percent matching basis. If awarded, the City would receive up to \$24,350 toward the project, with a required City match of \$24,350.

PREVIOUS ACTIONS – COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS

(Dates, committees, action taken)

On June 23, 2026, the Finance Committee considered the use of the remaining balance from the Digital Community Sign Capital Improvement Project to fund the City's share of the citywide GIS public tree inventory project.

The Finance Committee approved the use of the remaining Digital Community Sign project funds for the City's share of the tree inventory project and supported staff applying for a Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources Urban Forestry Grant to offset project costs.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

(If none, state N/A)

Proposed GIS Public Tree Inventory: **\$48,700**

Potential WDNR Urban Forestry Grant (50%): **(\$24,350)**

Required City Match: **\$24,350**

The City's required \$24,350 match would be funded from the remaining balance of the Digital Community Sign Capital Improvement Project, as previously considered by the Finance Committee.

The Digital Community Sign project has a remaining balance of \$33,547 after accounting for the \$50,000 contribution from Discover Whitewater and the City's net project cost of \$26,453.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends that the Common Council approve the submission of an application for a Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources 2027 Urban Forestry Grant for the citywide GIS public tree inventory project and authorize a City match of up to \$24,350 if the grant is awarded.

ATTACHMENT(S) INCLUDED

(If none, state N/A)
