VILLAGE OF RIVER FOREST
SUSTAINABILITY COMMISSION

Tuesday, September 9 2025 – 7:00 PM
Village Hall – 400 Park Ave., River Forest, IL

You may submit your written public comments via email in advance of the meeting to: sjansen@vrf.us
You may listen to the meeting by participating in a Zoom conference call as follows: dial-in number: 312-626-6799 with meeting ID: 816 4491 8569 or by clicking here. If you would like to speak during public comment, please email sjansen@vrf.us by 4:00 PM on Tuesday, September 9, 2025.

AGENDA

1. Call to Order/Roll Call
2. Public Comment
3. Adoption of Meeting Minutes for August 12, 2025
4. Commissioner Updates
5. Communications and Staff Reports
    a. Communications
    b. Community Solar Report
    c. CN Railway Grant/American In Bloom Recommendations
6. Migratory Bird Discussion
7. Native Plants and Greenspaces Preliminary Discussion
8. Schedule Next Meeting – October 14, 2025
9. Adjournment

VILLAGE OF RIVER FOREST
SUSTAINABILITY COMMISSION
TUESDAY, AUGUST 12, 2025

A regular meeting of the Village of River Forest Sustainability Commission was held on Tuesday, August 12, 2025, at 7:00 p.m. in the Community Room of Village Hall, 400 Park Avenue – River Forest, IL.

1. CALL TO ORDER/ROLL CALL

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 PM. Upon roll call, the following persons were:

Present: Co-Chair Lennon, Commissioners Hayley, Kadlec, Avalos, and Hoyt (arriving at 7:03), Student Commissioner Stierwalt
Absent: None
Also Present: Co-Chair Charrette (attending virtually); Management Analyst Seth Jansen

2. PUBLIC COMMENT

None

3. ADOPTION OF MEETING MINUTES

Commissioner Kadlec made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Avalos, to approve the meeting minutes from July 8, 2025.

Roll Call:
Ayes: Co-Chair Lennon, Commissioners Hayley, Kadlec, and Avalos
Absent: Co-Chair Charrette, Commissioner Hot
Nays: None
Motion Passes.

4. COMMISSIONER UPDATES

Co-Chair Lennon indicated he recently installed a heat pump water heater in his home and indicated it has been a success so far.

Commissioner Avalos encouraged residents to bike whenever possible during the good weather and for residents to use the Village's dedicated bike lanes. Commissioner Avalos also stated he attended a recent meeting and learned that cities cannot adopt a version of the Paris Climate Agreement.

Commissioner Hoyt participated in the West Cook Wild Ones Garden Tour and met a landscape designer with McAdam Landscaping and discussed further promotion of native landscaping. Commissioner Hoyt suggested finding ways to partner with local landscapers who offer native landscaping services and connect them with interested residents. Commissioner Hoyt also suggested compiling a list of properties which could serve as demonstration projects for native landscaping within the Village. Commissioner Hoyt also suggested promoting ways to make the Village bird friendly with the forthcoming seasonal

bird migration, suggesting newsletter articles and social media posts to raise awareness of ways to improve bird habitats within and bird migration through the Village. Commissioner Hoyt also mentioned that he had another idea measuring water quality at the Des Plaines to Mr. Jansen; Mr. Jansen indicated he had discussed this with staff and is looking into potentially incorporating it into an existing Public Works project.

Co-Chair Charrette outlined the plan for placing Commissioner Hoyt's ideas into the agendas for the meetings in the coming months. Co-Chair Charrette also noted that Co-Chair Lennon suggested incorporating the information regarding landscapers who offer native landscaping services in with the on-going outreach regarding the leaf blower ordinance. The Commission discussed outreach to landscapers regarding native landscaping.

Co-Chair Lennon suggested, for both the native planting and migratory bird ideas, identifying what would be needed from the Village, any limitations, and any identifiable goals and actions. Commissioner Hoyt indicated he would be able to provide some specific action items for the municipal level and for sharing with residents when these are brought for full discussion to the Commission. Co-Chair Charrette and Commissioner Hoyt indicated they would work together prior to next month's meeting and would present to the Commission at that time. Commissioner Hayley suggested incorporating any recommendations related to Native Plants from the UIC Climate Plans. Commissioner Kadlec suggested developing a local registry of native gardens to help quantify the impact within the Village and suggested a yard sign from the Village for recognition. The Commission inquired about the status of the Chicago Ave bioswales. The Commission discussed previous designations and pledges as well as existing ordinance regulations as potential topics for future discussion.

5. EV CHARGING STATION FEE REVIEW AND DISCUSSION

Mr. Jansen outlined the updates to the draft ordinance based on the feedback provided by the Commission last month. Mr. Jansen also indicated some changes suggested by Co-Chair Lennon prior to the meeting, including typo corrections. Mr. Jansen then introduced the topic of the overstay fee and solicited feedback from the Commission based on the limitations of the software system that operates the charging stations. The Commission discussed the overstay fees and how they relate to the charging fees. The Commission recommended the overstay fee begin to be incurred 15 minutes after receiving full charge for all charging stations. The Commission decided on a $100 cap for the total session fee to start and would monitor usage and overstays to see if it needed to be revised in the future.

Co-Chair Lennon made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Hayley, to recommend the Village Board of Trustees to approve an ordinance revising the fee for the Village's Electric Vehicle Charging Stations.

Roll Call:

Ayes:	Co-Chair Lennon, Commissioners Hayley, Kadlec, Avalos, and Hoyt
Absent:	None
Nays:	None
Not Voting:	Co-Chair Charrette

Motion Passes.

6. SOLAR ENERGY COMMUNICATIONS AND RESOURCES FOR RESIDENTS

Commissioner Hayley outlined a video she has begun working on for the Village website and social media explaining how the community solar program. Mr. Jansen solicited feedback and revisions from the Commissioners for the Guide to Solar Energy webpage for the Village website. Commissioner Hayley stated she would share other videos and resources explaining how community solar works. The Commission suggested making sure it is understandable and digestible for residents who are not familiar with the program and potentially using an analogy to explain it in a simple manner.

Commissioner Hayley noted that Concordia is in the process of signing up as a community solar anchor account; Co-Chair Charrette suggested highlighting that in future communications.

7. RIVER FOREST SUSTAINABILITY SCORECARD DISCUSSION

Commissioner Kadlec indicated he would make some final revisions and send it over to Mr. Jansen to be posted on the Village website. Commissioner Avalos suggested also promoting the nomination form that the Commission had put out earlier.

8. OTHER BUSINESS

Mr. Jansen outlined the upcoming communications plans for newsletters and social media and solicited input from the Commission for any upcoming newsletter articles. Commissioner Hoyt volunteered to write a newsletter article regarding migratory bird awareness and offered to write any further short newsletters on lawn care and native plants as well. The Commission discussed sending images in for social media posts as well. The Commission discussed upcoming dates for potential articles and requirements for the weekly and monthly articles. Commissioner Kadlec volunteered to write a newsletter article on light pollution, and Co-Chair Charrette volunteered to write a newsletter article on International Food Waste Awareness Day.

Mr. Jansen outlined the quarterly waste report included in the meeting packet. Mr. Jansen outlined data trends but indicated data from prior to the Village's current LRS contract was very inconsistent.

The Commission discussed sharing information from the UIC Climate Plans on the Village website and how to best utilize the recommendations from the plans.

9. SCHEDULE NEXT MEETING – SEPTEMBER 9, 2025

The Commission reached a consensus to hold its next meeting Tuesday, September 9, 2025.

10. ADJOURNMENT

Commissioner Avalos made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Hayley, to adjourn the meeting at 8:23 PM.

Roll Call:
Ayes: Co-Chair Lennon, Commissioners Hayley, Kadlec, Avalos, and Hoyt
Absent: None
Nays: None
Not Voting: Co-Chair Charrette
Motion Passes.

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Seth Jansen, Secretary

Village of River Forest
Public Works and Engineering
400 Park Avenue
River Forest, IL 60305
Tel: 708-366-8500

MEMORANDUM

Date: September 9, 2025
To: Sustainability Commission
From: Seth Jansen, Management Analyst
Subj: Community Solar Metrics

The metrics below are intended to provide an overview of the participation rates of the community solar program. Staff have contacted ComEd to inquire about data for total participation in any community solar program, in order to get a more accurate participation figure, but have not yet received a response. MC2 indicated the current time between sign up and enrollment offer being sent is less than two weeks. The community solar metrics capture the total enrollment numbers at the date listed. All individuals on the waitlist have received an offer from MC2 or referred to Nexamp and subsequently sent an offer. This data will be used to measure the effectiveness of the latest round of postcards promoting the program. The Commission will continue to discuss ways as to better promote the program and increase participation from residents.

Date	Number of Accounts that joined the Waitlist (Cumulative)	Total Number of Offers Sent from the Waitlist (MC2 and Nexamp)	Total Number of Enrollment Offers Accepted (MC2 and Nexamp)	Enrollment Conversion Rate	Total Enrolled kW Subscriptions (MC2 and Nexamp)
4/30/25	189	189	60	32%	489.9
5/31/25	190	190	60	32%	489.9
6/30/25	195	195	64	33%	529.3
7/30/25	195	195	64	33%	529.3

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MEMORANDUM

Date: September 9, 2025
To: Sustainability Commission
From: Seth Jansen, Management Analyst
Subj: America In Bloom/CN Railway Grant Recommendations Memo

In November 2024, the Village of River Forest was awarded a grant from CN Railway to assist with the Village's 2025 Spring parkway tree planting. A condition of this grant was the Village's participation in the America In Bloom (AIB) National Awards Program, where the Village completed a community profile and self-assessment in the areas of community vitality, floral impact, landscaped areas, urban forestry, environmental initiatives, and celebrating heritage. Volunteers at AIB then reviewed these documents and provided recommendations in each of the areas of focus. Earlier this summer, staff participated in the zoom call with AIB to review the recommendations attached. AIB noted that many of the recommendations are standard recommendations that may not be fully applicable to River Forest but may serve as a starting point for future projects.

The recommendations attached are for informational purposes for the Commission, and some may be outside the scope of the Commission. If any recommendations are of interest to the Commission, staff can further research the recommendation, the Commission may undertake it as a stand-alone project, or it can be incorporated into any ongoing or future Commission efforts.

Attachment: America In Bloom/CN Railway Grant Recommendations

River Forest, IL CN Grant Recommendations

Recommendation	Criteria	YES	NO	MAYBE	DONE	COMMENTS
Community Vitality						
Volunteer Coord to track volunteer hrs.	CV					
Promote Arts and Cultural experiences	CV					
Work with Biking organizations to promote safe cycling routes within state	CV					
Dog park events featuring veterinarians, groomers, and more	CV					
Grants thru CN, AARP, Neighborhoodassist	CV					
Engage youth with Community foundation to give grants & see value of philanthropy	CV					
Pocket Parks on Vacant lots	CV					
Rent a bike/scooter program thru library (Gallipolis OH example)	CV					
Memorial swing or bench program in parks and along trails	CV					
Classes on container gardening, square foot gardening, pallet gardening at local plant stores or library	CV					
Community clean up days using civic org, Scouts, School groups	CV					
Recommendation	Criteria	YES	NO	MAYBE	DONE	COMMENTS
Floral						
Educational signage & butterfly art for planting beds	FL					
Native plant demonstration gardens w/ youth, library, non-profits	FL					
Label wildflowers in demonstration area with links to website and QR codes	FL					
Dedicated staff person for floral changeouts and maintenance	FL					
Use water reservoir baskets to eliminate daily watering	FL					
Apply for Bee City status	FL					
Encourage businesses to start container/ flower box/ hanging basket displays	FL					
Work with IL ext office to get Master Gardeners to hold training, classes, events	FL					
Start Pollinator Program - examples Washington MO and Logan OH	FL					
Start a demonstration garden at a Village office	FL					
Work with Master Gardeners to recognize businesses and residents on exceptional floral displays. Announce monthly winners are board meetings.	FL					
Use FB page to schedule clean up and planting days	FL					

River Forest, IL CN Grant Recommendations

Recommendation	Criteria	YES	NO	MAYBE	DONE	COMMENTS
Landscape						
Choose plant palate with signature annual, perennial or color	LA					
Opt for naturalized look	LA					
Update landscape ordinances	LA					
Work with growers, garden oriented businesses, master gardeners to educate residents on plants used in River Forest	LA					
Hold a landscape and garden tour	LA					
Begin a Men's Garden Club & Youth Garden Club	LA					
Use IL Extension for training programs	LA					
Hold a yard of the month or neighborhood contest to improve neighborhood landscaping - acknowledge at village board meetings	LA					
Recommendation	Criteria	YES	NO	MAYBE	DONE	COMMENTS
Urban Forestry						
Work with IDNR on urban forestry matters	UF					
Work with neighborhoods to ID, measure and assess street trees	UF					
Use website and social media to teach residents about tree selection, care and benefits	UF					
Share info from ordinance on how to preserve, plant and maintain your UF	UF					
Tree Tender program (see treepittsburg.org)	UF					
Work with Girl Scouts and their Tree Promise	UF					
Pick a park or cemetery to label trees	UF					
Use IDNR for planting tree training and workshops	UF					
Recommendation	Criteria	YES	NO	MAYBE	DONE	COMMENTS
Environmental Efforts						
Invest in GEM electric vehicles for light duty in community	EE					
As replaced go to hybrid elec/gas mowers	EE					
Use Terra Cycle programs for youth	EE					
Take advantage of Solar Power when possible	EE					
Get LEED/BREEAM certification on buildings	EE					
Investigate partnerships on food waste	EE					
Work with water company to distribute low flow shower heads	EE					
Encourage more businesses to provide Electric car charging stations	EE					
Work with Science teachers and garden clubs on educational programs	EE					
Clean up day at school to encourage youth involvement	EE					
Sponsor Rain barrel class with IL Extension office	EE					

River Forest, IL CN Grant Recommendations

Recommendation	Criteria	YES	NO	MAYBE	DONE	COMMENTS
Celebrating Heritage						
Oral history program with volunteer reenactors at cemetery	CH					
Create a grave locator for Cemetery	CH					
Local history room with genealogical info at library	CH					
Workshops on how to use historical resources in the library's collections	CH					
Promote heritage thru businesses shopping events	CH					
Create Bike Ride thru History bike tour	CH					
Historic markers to commemorate the people and places from the past	CH					
Label naturalized areas as a historic place	CH					
Street signage designating historic significance	CH					
Begin Memorial Bench/ Tree program	CH/UF					
Recommendation	Criteria	YES	NO	MAYBE	DONE	COMMENTS
Overall Impression						
Create a family garden club to include all ages	OI					
Pavement art at crosswalks (rain.works special paint revealed with wet)	OI					
Link awards from publications and participation in organizations such as AIB on website	OI					
Recognize volunteer efforts on a consistent basis	OI					
Publish a "Why We love River Forest" brochure, pamphlet or social media segment	OI					
Use vacant retail spaces for temporary displays for non-profits or civic organizations	OI					
Provide pet waste stations in parks	OI					
Use pavement as a way to provide wayfinding signs	OI					

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MEMORANDUM

Date: September 9, 2025
To: Sustainability Commission
From: Seth Jansen, Management Analyst
Subj: Bird City Illinois Memo

At the August meeting of the Sustainability Commission, Commissioner Hoyt expressed interest in raising awareness of migratory birds and actions residents can take to promote bird conservation. Bird City Illinois is a community recognition program which serves as a guide to promote conservation practices which enhance the environment for birds and educate the public about the relationship between birds and people and how that contributes to a healthy community. The Sustainability Commission's community survey conducted last winter indicated the topic with the highest interest among responding residents was Local Wildlife & Biodiversity. Bird City Illinois designation may serve as guide to promote local bird conservation and bring further public awareness to the issue..

Should the Commission choose to seek designation, nine actions would be required. As outlined in the attached Action List, a community must officially adopt a Bird City Resolution every three years, upon initial application and at each renewal. A community must also annually adopt a World Migratory Bird Day proclamation and host a World Migratory Bird Day event. World Migratory Bird Day is officially celebrated on the second Saturday of May in the US. This date allows time for the Commission to create an event for next Spring and fulfill the remaining required actions prior to adoption of the resolution and proclamation.

The additional six actions required three actions within the Habitat category and three additional actions from any category. As a Tree City USA community, the Village has already achieved one of the Habitat actions. Additionally, the Village has achieved two of the Sustainability category actions: "demonstrate that your community participates in a community solar program or that a municipal building receives a significant percentage of its electricity from renewable energy" and "describe your community's sustainability initiatives (e.g.: recycling/reuse, composting, water reuse, energy savings, lighting, carbon footprint)". The Village would then only need to complete two additional Habitat actions and one further action from any category.

Attachment: Bird City Illinois Action List

Bird City Illinois

Part of the Bird City Network

How to apply for designation

All applications and renewals must be submitted ONLINE.

Contact us to set up an account.

BIRD CITY ILLINOIS - REQUIREMENTS

A minimum of 9 actions are required to be a Bird City in Illinois

- (1) Action 3.7.1 from Category 3 (Bird City Illinois Resolution)
- (3) At least 3 actions from Category 1 (Habitat)
- (2) Both actions from 3.1 (World Migratory Bird Day - Adopt a proclamation to recognize WMBD AND hold a public event to celebrate WMBD)
- (3) At least 3 more actions from any of the categories: Category 1 (Habitat), Category 2 (Threats to Birds), Category 3 (Education and Engagement), Category 4 (Sustainability)

Before you submit, please make sure to:

- Include a narrative statement for each action and, where appropriate, documentation and photographs that support the narrative.
- Provide any additional required information and have a municipal employee or elected official sign and date your application.
- Initiate payment ($200) once your application has been confirmed as received. Instructions for payment will be provided at that time.

NOTE: World Migratory Bird Day proclamation and a summary of events must be submitted annually.

New Applicants	Renewals

Submission: Applications accepted at any time	Submission: Proclamation and WMBD event must be completed annually; Resolution must be completed every 3 years with renewal submission
Review: Applications are reviewed quarterly	Review: Applications are reviewed quarterly
Fee: $200	Fee: $100 triennially

1. Habitat

1.1. Promote best management of community habitat

1.1.1 - Community has assessed all natural areas, developed a habitat master plan to create additional natural areas and habitat corridors connecting them.

1.1.2 - Document that current community planning seeks to provide additional bird habitat.

1.1.3 - Demonstrate through public documents or publicity that the local Audubon chapter (or a similar group) takes an active role in the planning process for protecting and enlarging favorable bird habitat.

1.1.4 - Demonstrate that your community understands the critical ecological role of pollinators by documenting your Bee City USA status or by describing another substantial effort to promote pollinator health such as participating in the Illinois Monarch project.

1.1.5 - Demonstrate that your community has been awarded Tree City USA status by the National Arbor Day Foundation.

1.2. Create and protect habitat

1.2.1 - Document a recent project that created or restored bird habitat in your community. How many acres or square footage did that include?

1.2.2 - Create and maintain a public demonstration garden including native plants to benefit birds, wildlife, and ecosystems. Select a highly visible location, consider signage and / or messaging about the space / process, plan for maintenance and monitoring.

1.2.3 - Demonstrate how a public golf course is managed to benefit birds.

1.2.4 - Show that your community maximizes the value of right-of-way space (e.g., power lines, pipelines, etc.) by planting them with native grasses, shrubs, herbs, and other prairie/grassland plants.

1.2.5 - Provide evidence (e.g., official designation of natural areas, easements, etc.) that existing bird habitat within community limits has legal protection. (Exclusions: Leash laws; prohibitions against disturbing nests and wildlife; areas consisting primarily of mowed grass)

1 . 3 . Promote native plants

1.3.1 - Document a program to support the establishment of natural lawns and native landscaping, by offering training (e.g. presentations, workshops, workdays) on native plantings for birds, pollinators, water quality. Examples can include public presentations of Audubon's Plants for Birds Initiative or Homegrown National Park.

1.3.2 - Work with local growers and suppliers to increase / ensure supply of locally appropriate native plants. Cultivate and publicize reliable suppliers. Organize, support or promote native plant sales.

1.3.3 - Attach a copy of a local ordinance demonstrating that your community does not restrict natural/native landscaping that emphasizes native plants and non-turf lawns. Consider improving existing regulations to improve emphasis on natives.

1 . 4 . Control invasive plants

1.4.1 - Show how the community offers the public information on control and removal of invasive species.

1 . 5 . Provide nesting habitat

1.5.1 - Develop and manage a program to create and monitor nest structures.

1 . 6 . Support focal species

1.6.1 - Document the establishment of a program to promote the conservation of a specific species of birds such as Purple Martins, Chimney Swifts, Peregrine Falcons, or American Kestrels through public education, preservation of nesting locations or constructing nest sites.

1 . 7 . Ensure clean water in natural waterways

1.7.1 - Bring community stakeholders together to discuss and plan projects for conserving water and improving water quality.

1.7.2 - The community has established a storm water management program that reduces polluted runoff and ensures protection for wetlands (including riparian and other aquatic ecosystems) and also promotes use of native plantings to accomplish management goals.

1.7.3 - Reduce sources of water pollution through clean-up events, identification and mitigation of run-off and/or point sources, and promoting regulation to control these inputs.

2 . Threats to Birds

2 . 1 . Address disturbance by harmful species

2.1.1 - Describe your community's educational program to control free-roaming cats and/or the manner in which you actively publicize the Cats Indoors! Initiative.

2.1.2 - Limit disturbance of birds from humans and/or pets in natural areas by enforcing leash laws, exclusion zones and pet waste disposal rules, especially during certain seasons (breeding, stopover).

2.1.3 - Discourage or prohibit feeding where disease might be a risk for wild or domestic birds.

2 . 2 . Address collisions with glass

2.2.1 - Demonstrate that your community provides property owners with information on how to protect birds from window strikes (e.g., online links, brochures).

2.2.2 - Document that a municipal or major public building has been awarded LEED certification as a bird-friendly building (LEED SSpc 55 or comparable).

2.2.3 - Attach your community's ordinance that requires new buildings to be built following bird-safe design, construction, and operation guidelines (e.g., Toronto Green Standard, see Ecology: Bird Deterrence; San Francisco).

2 . 3 . Address light pollution

2.3.1 - Provide information about the impact of light pollution and how residents and businesses can reduce artificial light at night (ALAN).

2.3.2 - Inventory all municipal lighting (building, facility, street) for Dark Sky compliance, develop a plan including timeline and priority actions.

2.3.3 - Document your community's strategy to reduce light pollution and encourage broad participation, particularly during migratory seasons.

2.3.4 - Document that your community has outdoor lighting regulation(s) to reduce the impacts of light pollution such as requiring Dark Sky compliant bulbs and fixtures for all or certain buildings and requiring operational approaches such as following established "Lights Out" protocols, especially during migration.

2 . 4 . Address direct human-related threats

2.4.1 - Implement actions to reduce pollution and associated entanglement and ingestion risks (e.g. fees or bans on single-use plastics, secure collection for fishing line / trash, clean up events).

2.4.2 - Regulate siting, construction, and operations of infrastructure (e.g. solar, power, communications, wind, transportation including roads and bridges) to reduce risk to birds.

2 . 5 . Address the threat of pesticides and other toxins

2.5.1 - Create and conduct an educational campaign on the impacts of pesticides and herbicides on bird populations and include practical information on solutions including Integrated Pest Management (IPM) and other natural controls.

2.5.2 - Encourage and promote the use of non-lead tackle and ammunition. Work with local sportsman's clubs to include related education in hunter education / gun safety.

2.5.3 - Reduce toxins / hazards by providing for and / or coordinating cleanup of lead ammunition on gun ranges and / or lead tackle (and fishing line) at fishing areas.

2.5.4 - Show that your municipality practices Integrated Pest Management or comparable, using natural pest control and the best available science to minimize pesticide and herbicide use.

2.5.5 - Ban the sale and private, agricultural and municipal use of specific toxic pesticide and herbicide products. Examples include the herbicide glyphosate (Roundup), as well as chlorpyrifos and neonicotinoid pesticides.

2.5.6 - Prohibit the use of lead ammunition and tackle on municipal land or more broadly within your community.

3 . Education & Engagement

3 . 1 . Celebrate World Migratory Bird Day

3.1.1 - Proclamation: Attach a copy of your community's officially-enacted WMBD proclamation. The proclamation must be presented annually. (MANDATORY)

3.1.2 - Host a World Migratory Bird Day (WMBD) event annually to celebrate birds in your community and to raise awareness of migratory birds, threats to their populations, and ways you can help to protect them. Your WMBD may be an education program, an educational bird walk, and/or a festival. It should incorporate the current conservation theme and may include components of past themes. For this event, birds must be the focus and should not be tagged onto other events.

In your narrative, include 1) the date, timing, and 2) description of the event and 3) detail how you incorporated the WMBD theme. 4) Please register your event and include a link to your event on the WMBD map in your narrative. Timing and scope of event TBD locally. (MANDATORY)

Find current theme materials and register your event at https://www.migratorybirdday.org/

3 . 2 . Increase awareness of birds and their habitats

3.2.1 - Provide web links or a community newsletter demonstrating that your community educates property owners on methods to create and enhance backyard habitat for birds.

3.2.2 - Educate the community about bird conservation issues, the actions the community has taken / is taking, and actions that can be taken at home.

3.2.3 - Demonstrate that your community actively raises awareness of its bird assets. Examples include placing a remote web camera on a nest platform, offering regular, public bird watching field trips, promoting Important Bird Areas (IBAs), birding hotspots, birding trails and phenomena (e.g., raptor, waterfowl, or songbird migration, congregating), in your area and/or creating a significant educational resource on your community's bird life.

3.2.4 - Develop a birding checklist for your area and make it available to citizens and tourist outlets in print and/or online. Consider working with students and/or community to create.

3.2.5 - Provide a link to your community's Bird City Illinois webpage, which must be visible from the main page of your municipal website (it may be located at the first level of a drop-down menu on the main page but cannot be any less visible) OR demonstrate that your Bird City effort has a significant social media presence.

3.2.6 - Create and distribute regular bird and bird conservation related content for online and news media (newsletters, blog posts, press releases, social media posts).

3.2.7 - Describe your community-sponsored environmental festival, such as an Earth Day, Conservation, or Sustainability event, with a bird education component. (This is in addition to WMBD).

3.2.8 - The community provides information regarding safe and responsible wildlife rescue & assistance, including contact information for aligned organizations & locally permitted wildlife rehabilitators.

3.2.9 - Document that your community maintains a birding trail or hot spot location with educational signage and/or literature. (Note: A birding hotspot alone is not sufficient – your community must actively promote birding and public education at the site itself.).

3.2.10 - Promote birding and enhance amenities at one or more birding locations. Examples include: facilitating early / off hours, access to restricted areas, improved signage, enhancing amenities (trails, blinds, observation towers, boardwalks, decks), improving security.

3.2.11 - Document that a municipal building has significant bird-friendly landscaping that features native plants AND signage that explains the importance of native plants and providing diverse habitat for birds (e.g., brush piles, water features).

3.2.12 - Encourage public art focused on birds through installments, awards, events, competitions.

3.2.13 - Create, support, or assist an injured bird response team to help licensed rehabilitators in taking calls and responding to reports of injured birds.

3 . 3 . Educate and engage all ages

3.3.1 - Document a substantial regular educational program appropriate for children, youth, and families on any bird and conservation related programs, such as climate change, energy efficiency, green/bird-safe buildings, or environmental sustainability, etc.

3.3.2 - Demonstrate that schools in your community participate in a nationally-recognized environmental/bird-related education program (e.g., Flying WILD, Audubon Adventures), incorporate such curriculum into their formal and informal learning environments, or that your community organizes its own substantial conservation education and outreach program for young people.

3.3.3 - Show how your community aids a local youth group (e.g., Boy Scouts of America, Girl Scouts of USA, 4-H Club, etc.) or conservation group in bird conservation projects (e.g., bluebird trail or nest box monitoring, habitat restoration, Wood Duck nest boxes, bird surveys, etc.).

3.3.4 - Demonstrate that your community's academic / corporate / community campuses have adopted practices that establish bird habitat and/or actively reduce threats to birds, ideally including students / employees / members.

3 . 4 . Ensure access to nature

3.4.1 - Plan and budget for parks, green spaces, water features, trails and habitat connections in all new development areas, and especially where such spaces and connections are lacking.

3.4.2 - Show that your community works with traditionally underserved communities to increase their access to natural areas, environmental education, birding resources, and conservation activities.

3.4.3 - Create demonstration bird-friendly landscape(s) on community property accessible by diverse groups.

3.4.4 - Offer multilingual programs and/or materials at environmental events.

3.4.5 - Develop one or more accessible nature / birding sites for visitors regardless of physical abilities.

3.4.6 - Identify and address other barriers to nature / birding access (e.g. hazardous plants, insects, animals, roads, areas).

3 . 5 . Involve the community in conservation and stewardship

3.5.1 - Designate a community mascot or city bird species selected through a public engagement process.

3.5.2 - Highlight traditional knowledge and approaches to conservation. Determine the indigenous traditional territory(ies) where your community occurs. Describe efforts to encourage the participation and perspective of local Indigenous community(ies) in the initiative.

> This website https://native-land.ca/ can be used to help map Indigenous territories, treaties, and languages.

3.5.3 - Illustrate a program that involves schools, garden clubs, or other organizations in bird conservation activities.

3.5.4 - Research Important Bird Areas (IBAs) or similar special habitats or bird resources in your community and encourage stewardship activities to protect them. Examples include bird and/or habitat monitoring, restoration, invasive species removal, advocacy. May include formation of a dedicated stewardship group.

3.5.5 - Create and maintain bird feeding stations at parks, nature centers, schools and tourism / lodging sites. Consider incorporating education or monitoring activities. Note: It would be important to monitor the feeding stations for large usage by nonnative House Sparrows and ensure visitors are not feeding improper foods.

3.5.6 - Host community planting event(s) to create or restore native bird habitat on municipal property. May include per event or dedicated on-going volunteer participation.

3.5.7 - Work with partners in the non-profit, governmental and corporate / business sectors to adopt bird-friendly practices and help sustain the Bird City program.

3 . 6 . Promote scientific research and monitoring

3.6.1 - Set up systems for community science participation (e.g. setting up accounts and projects within existing platforms like eBird and iNaturalist and protocols and training for participation).

3.6.2 - Demonstrate that your community is represented in at least one citizen science bird monitoring program (e.g., the Christmas Bird Count, Midwest Crane Count, Climate Watch, Great Backyard Bird Count, Swift Night Out, Audubon Climate Watch, D-Bird, Globe at Night, Nestwatch, FeederWatch, Hummingbirds at Home,, the Big Sit, Marsh Monitoring, Global Bird Rescue, or other actively coordinated community science project).

3.6.3 - Attach results from organized bird monitoring or data obtained from researchers or volunteers in the local park system. (Exclusions: Programs that receive credit under 3.6.2: Christmas Bird Count, Great Backyard Bird Count, Midwest Crane Count, Climate Watch, etc.)

3 . 7 . Mobilize support / funding for community bird conservation

3.7.1 - Resolution: Attach a copy of your community's officially-enacted Bird City Illinois resolution. This must be a resolution that is voted on and passed by the appropriate municipal council/board. Do not submit a proclamation. The resolution must be voted on and passed every three years. (MANDATORY)

4 . Sustainability

4 . 1 . Educate residents about climate impacts and renewable energy

4.1.1 - Describe your community's efforts to educate residents about climate change, effects on birds/biodiversity, and solutions.

4 . 2 . Reduce energy use and carbon emissions

4.2.1 - Document an energy audit for municipal building(s) and show that your community is working to implement its recommendations.

4.2.2 - Create a community plan to reduce energy use and carbon emissions through operational or building design changes, nature-based solutions, renewable energy use.

4.2.3 - Demonstrate that your community participates in a community solar program or that a municipal building receives a significant percentage of its electricity from renewable energy.

4 . 3 . Promote sustainable infrastructure and practices

4.3.1 - Adopt nature-based solutions (e.g. keeping water at surface, green roofs, tree cover, wetlands) adding natural features and / or processes into the built environment to promote adaptation and resilience and increase biodiversity.

4.3.2 - Demonstrate community recognition or certification by a recognized rigorous sustainability program.

4.3.3 - Show that your community goes above and beyond in its support for, and implementation of, green transportation (e.g., bike trails, rideshare programs, bike trails/lanes, etc.). Be sure to utilize the narrative to illustrate why your community is exceptional because standard practice will not receive credit.

4.3.4 - Document recognition or certification of an energy efficient municipal building (LEED certified silver or higher or comparable).

4.3.5 - Describe your community's sustainability initiatives (e.g.: recycling/reuse, composting, water reuse, energy savings, lighting, carbon footprint) and/or describe how your municipality has incentive programs for installing sustainable systems and nature-based solutions.

4.3.6 - Require new buildings to be certified by a recognized sustainability program (LEED or comparable).

Village of River Forest
Public Works and Engineering
400 Park Avenue
River Forest, IL 60305
Tel: 708-366-8500

MEMORANDUM

Date: September 9, 2025
To: Sustainability Commission
From: Seth Jansen, Management Analyst
Subj: Native Plants Discussion Memo

At the August meeting of the Sustainability Commission, the Commission discussed interest in further exploring ways to promote native planting among residents and incorporate native plants at Village properties. As a preliminary discussion item, the Commission inquired about any recommendations with the UIC Climate Plans relating to native plants.

The Lopez Garcia class section's report included one overarching Opportunity Area focused on the Natural Environment. One of the Goals within the Opportunity Area was "Support biodiversity through native vegetation installations on private and public lands", which contained three Strategies: "Educate the general public on the benefits of planting native vegetation", "Develop an abatement program to subsidize eco-friendly plantings", and "Update the landscaping code to incentivize and require a percentage of total landscaping area dedicated to native plants for new land developments". The attached document includes the introduction of the Opportunity Area along with an outline of the challenges, recommendations, and next steps for each Strategy within the Goal.

The Tilahun class section's report did not address native plants or natural areas directly, but did tangentially touch on the topic within the report Section on Resilience. Within the Action "Prioritize Soil Health to Enhance Carbon Capture", the report recommends " River Forest should partner with West Cook Wild Ones to host a yearly "Native Garden Walk" where neighbors can learn from one another about restoring native prairie and increasing soil biodiversity featuring garden awards to homes with healthiest soil" and that the Village should "Consider a partnership with neighboring communities and West Cook Wild Ones, a non-profit dedicated to eco-friendly landscaping and biodiversity, to create a culture of healthy soil around the Village". The report also recommends "Expanding bioswales along roads and sidewalks to capture and temporarily store runoff" by "[implementing] a phase-in approach prioritizing areas with the highest risk of flooding and integrating green infrastructure solutions into planned capital improvement projects" and "[considering] the availability of suitable locations along existing rights-of-way and Village-owned parking lots, soil conditions, and potential need for soil amendments for bioswales". The report also recommended that the Village "encourage the planting of adaptive understory and multiple levels of vegetation in Village landscape planning" and "implement a planning regulation that requires new or refurbished buildings in

non-residential zones of the Village to replace the whole footprint or floor plat coverage of a building with green space, through the addition of green roofs, green walls and green balconies". To achieve these recommendations, the report recommended the Village "educate River Forest residents on why […] native understory plants, and multi-tiered vegetation are important" and noted that "the West Cook Wild Ones offers resources for finding native plant sources and landscapers".

Each of these sections is attached in its entirety for the review of the Commission. Commission input and feedback is sought with regards to how the Village may incorporate these recommendations in any efforts and initiatives relating to native plants.

Attachment:

- UIC Climate Reports: Lopez Garcia Class Section Native Plant Recommendations
- UIC Climate Reports: Tilahun Class Section Resilience Recommendations

5. Opportunity Area: Natural Environment

Introduction

River Forest residents have access to abundant natural amenities such as the Thatcher Woods Forest Preserve, the Des Plaines river, and numerous beautiful parks. These features support biodiversity in the local, ecosystem, remove greenhouse gasses from the air, and absorb stormwater. This Opportunity Area aims to preserve these community assets and support their ecological benefits. This section is defined by two goals:

Goal 5.1: Support biodiversity through native vegetation installations on private and public lands

Goal 5.2: Grow and manage tree canopy to protect urban forestry health

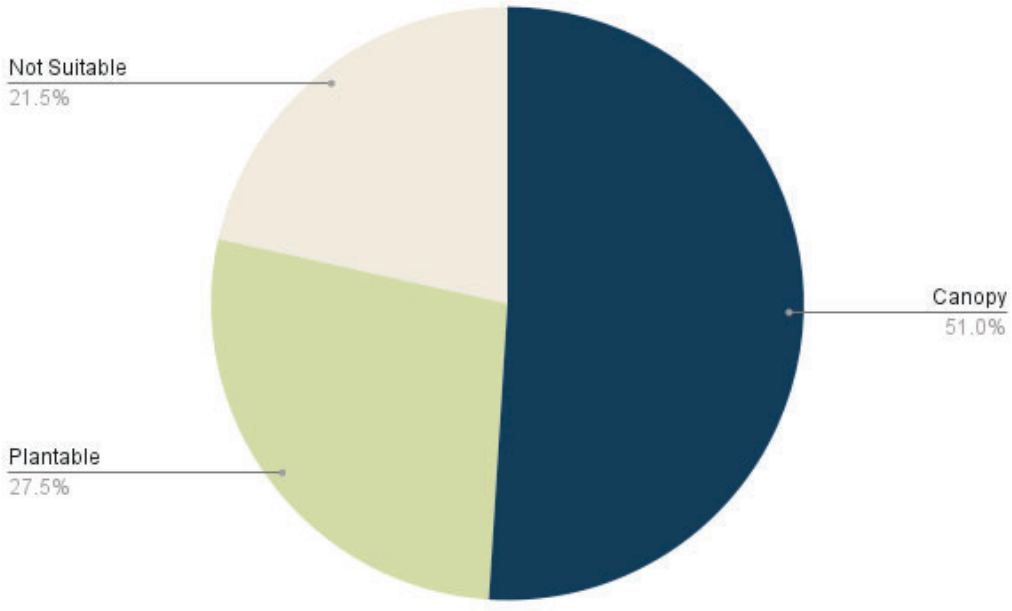
Trees

River Forest trees are a major component of the community's sustainable future. A healthy urban tree canopy produces many benefits for the region and the planet as a whole. Each year, trees provide the municipality with $996,000 of benefits in energy savings, stormwater mitigation, and property value increases. These trees also store large quantities of carbon, producing an additional $2,174,000 in value[5.1]. Mature trees also absorb heat, support wildlife, and beautify properties[5.2]. River Forest boasts 51% tree canopy, which exceeds the 28% tree canopy for Cook County[5.3]. River Forest also exceeds the total tree canopy of many of its neighbors by over 20%. The difference is due to 87.3% of the roughly 1,027 acres of natural spaces covered by tree canopies. Residential and institutional areas constitute a larger footprint of the Village and therefore have a denser tree cover. Planting trees in all areas designated as plantable would achieve a total of 79% tree coverage (Figure 5.1). River Forest's tree coverage is decreasing from 56% to 51% between 2010 to 2017, but planting more trees in suitable areas would reverse this trend.

Native Plants

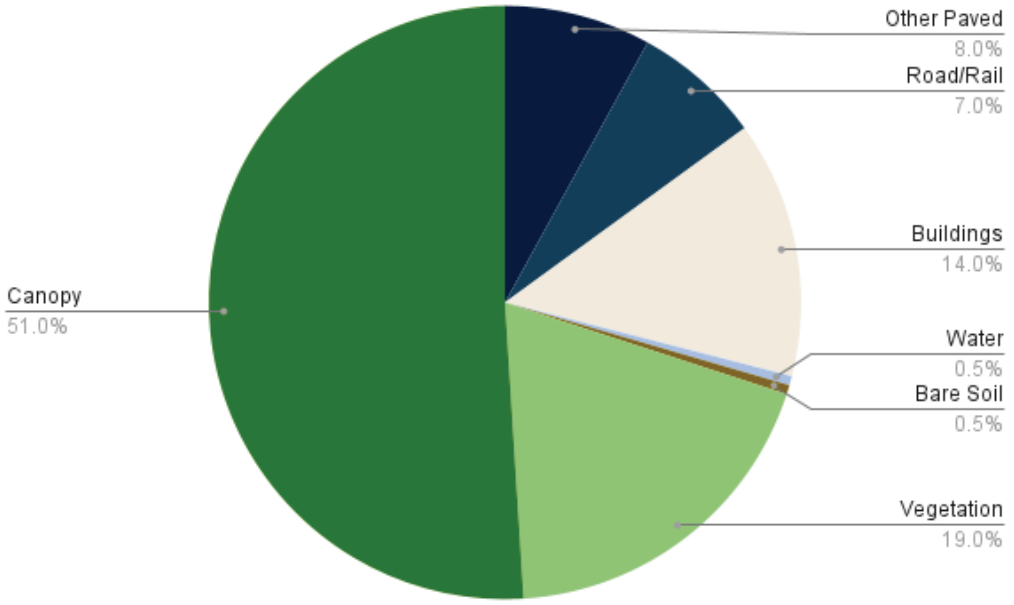
According to the Chicago Botanic Garden, "native plants are those found in a specific region that began growing there naturally, without being introduced either directly or indirectly by nonnative settlers"[5.4]. Native plants in the

Figure 5.1. Tree Canopy Coverage and Plantable Space in River Forest



Source: Chicago Region Trees Initiative. (n.d.). CRTI Municipal Canopy Summaries. Retrieved from Chicago RTI: https://chicagorti.org/app/uploads/2024/02/RiverForestSummary.pdf

Figure 5.2. Land Cover Distribution in River Forest



Source: Chicago Region Trees Initiative, Accessed 19, 2024, CRTI Municipal Canopy Summaries. Retrieved from Chicago RTI: https://chicagorti.org/app/uploads/2024/02/RiverForestSummary.pdf

Midwest, such as Bluestem grasses and Wild Geranium wildflowers, are naturally adapted to local climate and soil conditions. This means native plants are easier to grow, requiring minimal watering, fertilizing, and pruning once roots are established. Their roots can generally penetrate soil better, which helps prevent soil erosion and increase soil capacity to absorb stormwater toxins[5.5]. In contrast to non-native plants that demand supplemental water and pesticides, native plants are less costly to maintain and are well-suited to mitigate the effects of flooding like in certain parts of River Forest. Residents can enjoy colorful wildflowers and hardy shrubs that naturally evolve throughout the seasons while saving time and additional financial burden of maintaining non-native plants.

Native plants also have an important role in supporting the health and resilience of local ecosystems, which is often measured in biodiversity levels. Biodiversity is the variety of animals, plants, and other organisms living in specific areas. Scientists believe biodiversity supports many of the environmental systems that humans and all other living things benefit from, such as pollinating bees and hummingbirds for gardens[5.6]. Urbanization often damages biodiversity by fragmenting natural ecosystems into isolated areas like parks. Planting native vegetation on residential lawns and commercial landscapes help support biodiversity by providing shelter and food sources that local wildlife require to thrive.

Source: "Residential." CICADA. Accessed April 22, 2024. https://cicada-idnr.org/residential/plant-management/landscape-with-native-plants/.

Goal 1.1: Support biodiversity through native vegetation installations on private and public lands

Strategy 1.1.1: Educate the general public on the benefits of planting native vegetation

Challenge

The minimal presence of native plants in urbanized areas is often due to a lack of awareness on the distinction between native and non-native plants. Commercial garden centers and nurseries may not adequately educate residents on the benefits of native plants and instead recommend planting non-native or invasive plant species.

Recommendation

This strategy aims to encourage planting native vegetation through a variety of programs and educational tools that showcase the ecological benefits of grasses and wildflowers that naturally grow in the area. Diversifying education methods helps the Village reach more residents and reinforce its commitment to sustainable living.

Lead

- Administration and Finance
- Building Development Services & Zoning
- Public Works and Development Services

Partners

- None

Supporting Plans and Policies

- River Forest Comprehensive Plan
- River Forest Beekeeping Program
- Parkways for Pollinators Gardens

Funding

- None

Best Practices

- City of Chicago Sustainable Backyards Program: Native Plants[5.7]
- West Cook Wild Ones non-profit organization[5.8]

Timeframe

- Short Term | 1-2 years

Next Steps

- Establish a Village web page dedicated to the benefits of planting native vegetation and best practices for plant maintenance
- Update Beekeeping program web page to include links to native vegetation web page
- Commit to being a Bee City USA and begin adopting their standards- Bee City USA Commitments- Bee City USA
- Establish “No Mow May” as a month to support the growth of native vegetation and reduce water costs for residents
- Partner with West Cook Wild Ones non-profit organization to spread awareness of native vegetation through educational workshops, plant sales, and social media resources

Goal 1.1: Support biodiversity through native vegetation installations on private and public lands

Strategy 1.1.2: Develop an abatement program to subsidize eco-friendly plantings

Challenge

River Forest needs to increase native plants in residential areas, given that single-family homes constitute the majority of the Village. For residents, installing larger native planting projects can be expensive. For example, rain gardens—gardens that absorb stormwater by lying below their surroundings—typically cost between $3 and $4 per square foot[5.9]. Green roofs—roofs with vegetation over a waterproof membrane—usually cost between $18 and $25 per square foot[5.10].

Recommendation

Rain gardens and green rooftops provide ideal opportunities to increase native plantings in a community with the added benefit of stormwater management. These installations also enhance ecological services by increasing biodiversity by providing habitats for pollinators. Subsidizing the cost of constructing rain gardens or green rooftops will decrease up-front costs for residents.

Timeframe

- Medium Term | 2-5 years

Lead

- Sustainability Commission

Partners

- None

Supporting Plans and Policies

- 2019 Comprehensive Plan
- River Forest Sustainable Living Guide

Funding

- Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities Grants EPA

Best Practices

- Urbana, IL covers 25% of the installation cost up to a maximum of $350. The project has to treat the runoff from a minimum of 500 square feet of impervious area to be eligible for abatement. After an inspection, the city will give the appropriate abatement[5.11].
- Des Moines, IA covers 50% of the total cost of the project, with a max abatement of $2000[5.12].

Next Steps

- Community outreach to gauge interest in abatement program
- Research the exact parameters of abatement, such as maximum dollar amount abatement that will cover each project and the minimum requirements of project to receive abatement
- Develop application form for residents to apply for abatement
- Advertise abatement program in newsletter and publish application on the Village's website

Goal 1.1: Support biodiversity through native vegetation installations on private and public lands

Strategy 1.1.3: Update the landscaping code to incentivize and require a percentage of total landscaping area dedicated to native plants for new land developments

Challenge

New land developments often disrupt natural ecosystems through the destruction of preexisting trees and plants. In addition to negative environmental impacts, the installation of non-native plants may also increase development and landscaping maintenance costs. Local landscape ordinances may inadvertently contribute to ecosystem damage and development costs by favoring non-native over native plants[5.13].

Recommendation

This strategy aims to increase the total area of native vegetation and mitigate the disruptive nature of new land development by requiring a percentage of total landscaping dedicated to native plants. The Village may also reduce zoning requirements for plan proposals and introduce permit flexibility to incentivize including native vegetation in landscape plans.

Lead

- Building Development Services & Zoning
- Public Works and Development Services

Partners

- Landscape architect consultant

Supporting Plans and Policies

- River Forest Comprehensive Plan
- River Forest Beekeeping Program
- Parkways for Pollinators Gardens

Funding

- None

Best Practices

- Landscape Ordinance for the Village of Schaumburg, IL [5.14]
- Landscape Ordinance for the Village of Orland Park, IL[5.15]

Timeframe

- Medium Term | 2-5 years

Next Steps

- Define ideal percentage of native plant species requirement, reference list of approved native plant species, and establish maintenance criteria in a landscape ordinance amendment
- Require higher percentages of native vegetation for additional impervious surface coverage exceeding maximum limits
- Mandate the removal of invasive non-native or exotic vegetation, especially around ecologically sensitive areas

ACTION

3.2 Prioritize Soil Health to Enhance Carbon Capture

The Low-Emissions Village | The Adaptable & Prepared Village | The Engaged & Informed Village

WHY

Soil is the living ecosystem that we're all connected to. River Forest has a diverse landscape of soil that provides a breadth of functionality, from drainage to carbon capture to fighting off diseases and pests. Healthy soil is defined by a maximization of living roots, biodiversity, and soil cover wherever possible.

By making soil healthier, we are able to sequester more carbon, increase water absorption (porosity), and improve wildlife and pollinator habitats. Analysis of the soil health in River Forest shows that the soils near Thatcher Woods have more biodiversity than in the surrounding residential areas[59]. This is not a surprising discovery given the disturbance of nature required to build housing, but there are ways River Forest can promote soil health and biodiversity in backyards, front yards, and on parkways.

Figure 19: Soil type and soil biodiversity in River Forest[59]

- The map on the left shows an anlaysis of soil types, while the map to the right shows soil biodiversity based on the level of organic matter depletion. Majority of the soil in the Village has heavy organic matter depletion. The lowest levels of organic matter depletion are found in Thatcher Woods.

[59] United States Department of Agriculture, Natural Resources Conservation Service. Web Soil Survey [Website]. Retrieved from https://websoilsurvey.nrcs.usda.gov/app/WebSoilSurvey.aspx

WHAT:

3.2.1 The Public Works department should develop a municipal soil health index based on current conditions and ensure that all municipal and privately-owned soil is improved to meet the minimum index. Suggested criteria include: porosity, biodiversity, sand/silt/clay levels, and organic carbon count.

3.2.2 River Forest should partner with West Cook Wild Ones to host a yearly "Native Garden Walk" where neighbors can learn from one another about restoring native prairie and increasing soil biodiversity featuring garden awards to homes with healthiest soil.

HOW

- River Forest can utilize the USDA's Natural Resource Conservation Service's Web Soil Survey to conduct its own analysis. It is a free tool, and we have provided a Shapefile of River Forest in the Appendix that can be used for your Area of Interest (AOI) (the area's soil that you would like to study.)[60]
- Consider a partnership with neighboring communities and West Cook Wild Ones, a non-profit dedicated to eco-friendly landscaping and biodiversity, to create a culture of healthy soil around the Village.[61]

Figure 20: Monarch Waystation near Lake Street and Lathrop Avenue

- Soil health is an important tool to strengthen pollinator habitats.

ACTIONS	IMPACT	ADMIN. BURDEN	COST	IMPLEMENTATION TIME
3.2.1	**HIGH -** as healthy soil can promote increased carbon capture and help mitigate flooding		$ as the US Government has free soil analysis resources.	**1-2 YEARS** for the index and ongoing maintenance thereafter.
3.2.2	**LOW -** as it promotes better resident behavior around native gardening but does not have direct regulatory effects that prepare for extreme heat, cold, and flooding		$$ as the event will be largely driven by the community	**1 YEAR.** River Forest should aim to host the first walk in summer 2025.

[60] United States Department of Agriculture, Natural Resources Conservation Service. Web Soil Survey. Retrieved from https://websoilsurvey.nrcs.usda.gov/app/WebSoilSurvey.aspx
[61] Wild Ones West Cook. "Home." [Website]. Retrieved from https://westcook.wildones.org/

ACTION

3.3 Protect Roads and Sidewalks from Extreme Temperatures and Weather Events

The Adaptable & Prepared Village

WHY

River Forest faces increasing challenges from severe weather events, including intense rainfall and flooding, due to the effects of climate change. As the frequency and intensity of heavy precipitation events continue to rise, the existing stormwater management systems in the Village may become overwhelmed, leading to localized flooding and damage to critical infrastructure like roads and sidewalks.

This can disrupt daily life for residents, pose safety risks, and potentially result in costly repairs or replacements. Protecting roads and sidewalks from the impacts of flooding is crucial to maintaining safe mobility, ensuring access to essential services, and minimizing disruptions to daily activities. By implementing proactive measures to enhance the resilience of its street infrastructure, River Forest can better adapt to the challenges posed by climate change and severe weather events, safeguarding public safety, minimizing economic losses, and promoting long-term sustainability for the community.

WHAT

3.3.1 Expanding bioswales along roads and sidewalks to capture and temporarily store stormwater runoff.

3.3.2 Promote Permeable Pavers & Depave when possible.

3.3.3 Exploring the concept of "Street Rivers" to intentionally allow certain streets to convey and store stormwater during extreme events.

Figure 21: Bioswale in River Forest

Source: Austin Busch

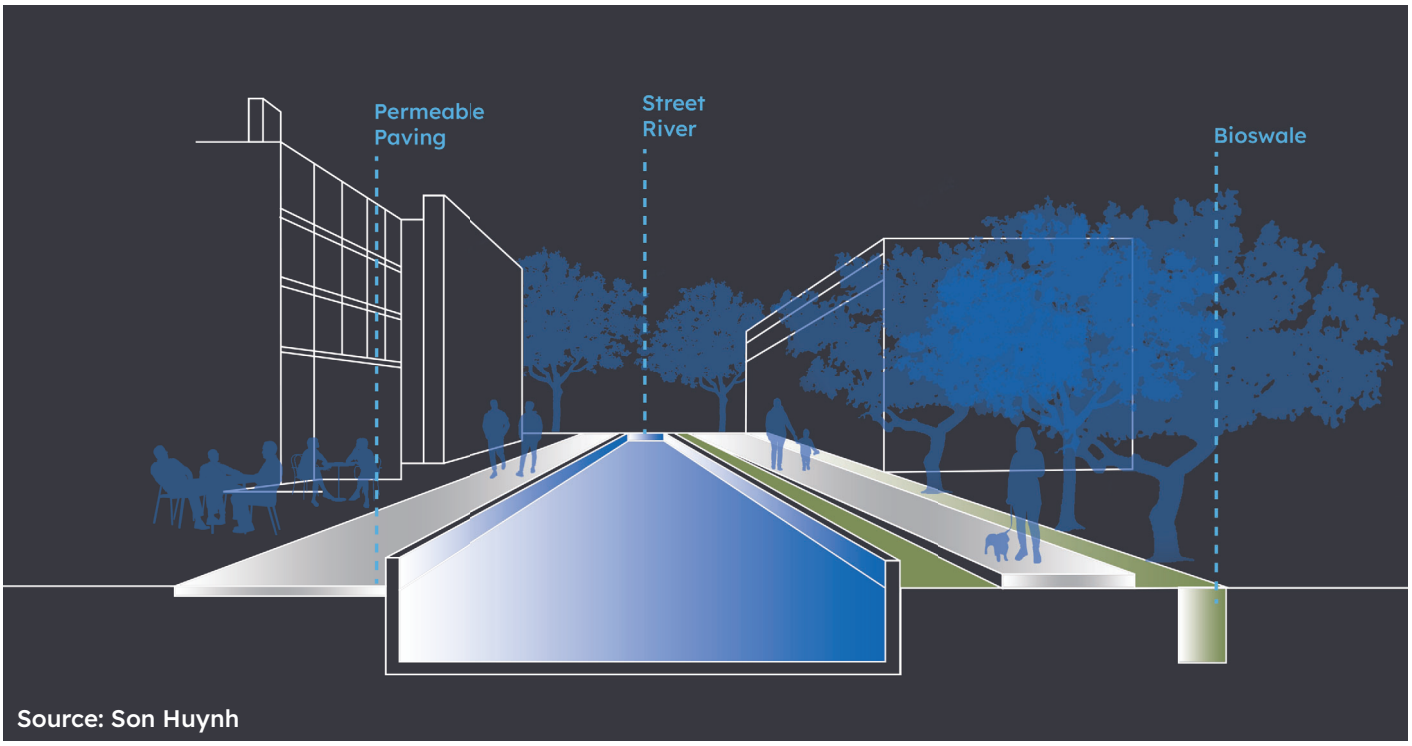
HOW

- Implement a phase-in approach, prioritizing areas with the highest risk of flooding and integrating green infrastructure solutions into planned capital improvement projects.
- Actively pursue grant opportunities and explore innovative financing mechanisms, such as green bonds and public-private partnerships.
- Consider the availability of suitable locations along existing rights-of-way and Village-owned parking lots, soil conditions, and potential need for soil amendments for bioswales.
- Ensure requirements are followed for structural integrity, load-bearing capacity, and integration with existing stormwater management infrastructure for permeable pavers.
- Maintain vegetation management, sediment removal, and surface cleaning
- Identify suitable streets for "Street Rivers" and potential impacts on traffic flow and accessibility.
- Develop incentive programs and stakeholder engagement for non-residential permeable paver implementation.

Figure 22: Permeable pavers in an alley

Source: Austin Busch

Figure 23: Recommendations for flood management streetscapes



Source: Son Huynh

This conceptual cross-section illustrates an innovative approach to managing stormwater along an urban streetscape through integrated green infrastructure strategies. At the center is the **"street river" concept** - the roadway itself is designed with a shallow, vegetated channel to temporarily convey and store excess runoff from intense rain events. **Permeable paving** along the sidewalks and building entryways allows precipitation to infiltrate through the surface rather than exacerbating runoff. On the far right side, a **bioswale** provides additional capacity to capture and filter stormwater through its sloped, vegetated drainage course. Trees and landscaping elements line the corridor, promoting infiltration while providing shade and enhancing aesthetics. This multifaceted design aims to increase the resilience of city streets to flooding impacts by mimicking natural water flow paths and leveraging an interconnected system of retention, conveyance, and infiltration measures.

ACTIONS	IMPACT	ADMIN. BURDEN	COST	IMPLEMENTATION TIME
3.3.1	**HIGH -** on mitigating flooding as bioswales can reduce peak stormwater runoff by 25-40%.		$$ ranging from $50,000 to $100,000 per acre, depending on scale, site preparation, and ongoing maintenance.	**6 MONTHS-2 YEARS** for site preparation, design, and construction.
3.3.2	**HIGH -** on mitigating flooding as bioswales can reduce peak stormwater runoff by 25-40%.		$$ ranging from $10 to $25 per square foot for permeable pavers, with additional funding needed for incentive programs.	**6 MONTHS-3 YEARS** for Village-owned parking lots and developing incentive programs.
3.3.3	**HIGH -** will protect infrastructure and residential areas from severe flood damage, potentially reducing peak stormwater runoff by 50-80% in designated areas.		$$$ ranging from $500,000 to $2 million per mile, depending on scale, grading, and drainage improvements.	**1-5 YEARS** for site assessment, design, public engagement, and construction.

ACTION

3.4 Enhance Ecosystem Connectivity and Biodiversity Throughout the Village

The Low-emissions Village | The Adaptable & Prepared Village | The Engaged & Informed Village

WHY

The value of biodiversity often goes unnoticed in policymaking, yet natural ecosystems offer crucial tools for temperature moderation and stormwater regulation. Thatcher Woods, a high-quality floodplain forest in River Forest, is one of the few left in Cook County. It plays a vital role in wildlife preservation, flood risk reduction, and erosion control.

River Forest's resilience hinges significantly on Thatcher Woods, complemented by well-designed parks and green areas. The diverse vegetation layers beneath tree canopies are essential for ecosystem health. While climate regulation services provided by vegetation can vary based on many factors, well-connected and stable vegetative systems are not only more immune to invasive species and disease, but require less maintenance. By emulating international best practices, River Forest can become a "village in a garden," mandating new construction and renovations to match their square footage with added green space. These efforts, requiring community involvement, are crucial for establishing a resilient network of green spaces in River Forest.

WHAT

3.4.1 Mainstream the planting of mini-forests in urban sites by allocating ~1000 square feet plots of land to a high density woodland, with as many as 100x the number of trees found in natural forest stands.

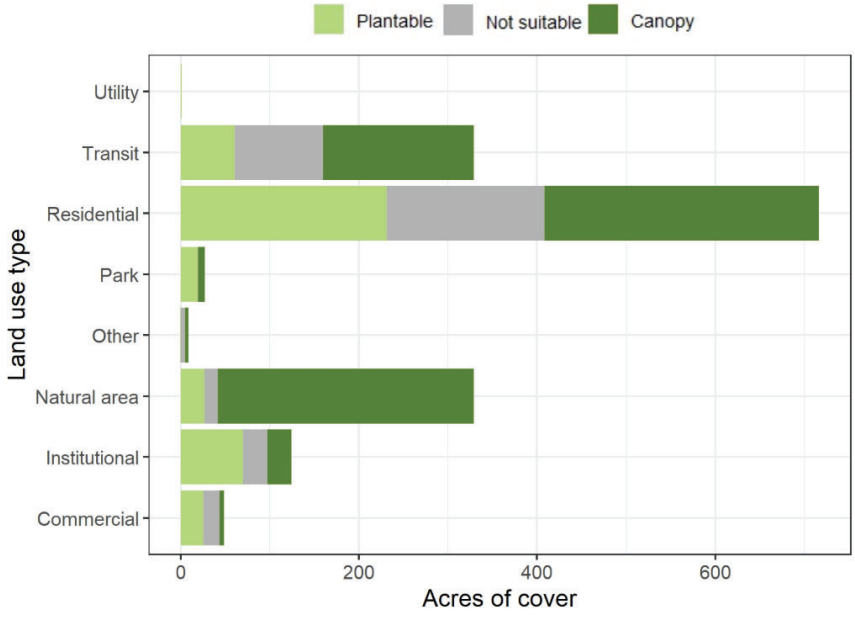
3.4.2 Encourage the planting of adaptive understory and multiple levels of vegetation in Village landscape planning.

3.4.3 Implement a planning regulation that requires new or refurbished buildings in non-residential zones of the Village to replace the whole footprint or floor plate coverage of a building with green space, through the addition of green roofs, green walls and green balconies.

HOW

- Use the "Mini-Forests" field guide created by MKSK Studios to find out more information on the benefits and planning process of mini-forests.[62]
- The West Cook Wild Ones offer resources for finding native plant sources and landscapers. [61]
- Educate River Forest residents on why these mini-forests, native understory plants, and multi-tiered vegetation are important, as they may not meet community expectations of manicured landscapes.
- It is important to consider that maximizing the performance of a small parcel of land requires extensive seasonal planning, evaluation, and maintenance.

Figure 24: Plantable space area in River Forest by land use type[63]



The residential and institutional land use types have the most potential to expand canopy in River Forest. Source: Chicago Region Trees Initiatives. [63] (2024)

[62] MKSK Architects. (2024). Mini Forest Field Guide. Issuu. Retrieved from https://issuu.com/mksk/docs/mini_forest_field_guide_mksk
[61] Wild Ones West Cook. "Home.". Retrieved from https://westcook.wildones.org/
[63] Chicago Region Trees Initiatives. (2024). *River Forest Summary.* Retrieved from https://chicagorti.org/app/uploads/2024/02/RiverForestSummary.pdf

Figure 25: The Metra Station rendered with green space

Figure 26: Rendering of added understory plantings in Priory Park

ACTIONS	IMPACT	ADMIN. BURDEN	COST	IMPLEMENTATION TIME
3.4.1	**HIGH -** reduces the urban heat island effect, while absorbing a greater amount of rainwater and decreasing flooding intensity		$$ include survey administration, preparation, planting, materials, and maintenance.	Building mini-forests can take upwards of **1 YEAR** in site preparation, but will require maintenance for at least **2 YEARS** following their planting.
3.4.2	**HIGH -** greater absorption of rainwater and decrease flooding effects		$$ include survey administration, preparation, planting, materials, and maintenance.	Increasing levels of understory will take at least **SEVERAL MONTHS** to develop and design with annual maintenance.
3.4.3	**HIGH -** more green infrastructure will increase water absorbency and reduce the urban heat island effect		$ Cost placed on the developer.	A policy and/or guideline will take at least **SEVERAL MONTHS** to develop and approve.

ACTION

3.5 Measure and Monitor Climate Data with a Centralized and Accessible Database

The Adaptable & Prepared Village | The Engaged & Informed Village

WHY

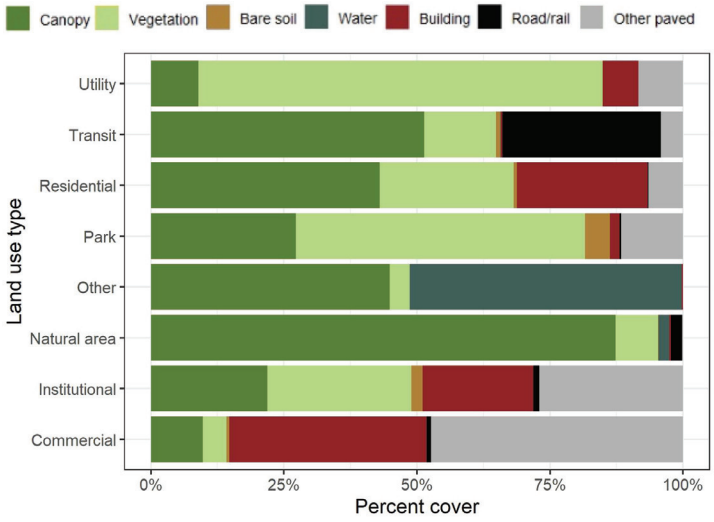
A Village-wide climate change impact survey will shed light on areas within the Village that are at risk to extreme weather events, have predispositions to invasive species, flooding risk, and more. Creating a centralized and accessible database for residents to track climate impacts in their neighborhood and public spaces can help manage the associated risk of these areas and help identify resilient strategies to mitigate risk. A survey can help the community as it enables an adaptive nature for parks and natural spaces, promotes community initiative to be aware of climate change impacts, brings a potential for proper planning to high-risk areas, creates an ability to track and assess climate-induced losses and damages, and well-designed landscapes can help sequester carbon dioxide and reduce flooding. Building a centralized database will provide public information on the most climate-change vulnerable areas throughout the Village, specifically in parks, green spaces, and homes. This database will allow residents to update changes in the environment including invasive species, plant diseases, effects from extreme weather, and more.

WHAT

3.5.1 Conduct a Village-wide climate change impact survey for parks and natural spaces that can be updated in a centralized database.

3.5.2 Encourage biodiversity with community participation in measuring and managing a biodiversity index of River Forest.

Figure 27: Land cover in surrounding communities[63]



HOW

- The Handbook on the Singapore Index on Cities' Biodiversity (also known as the City Biodiversity Index) is an in-depth guide on how to measure and use the index for a city. The scoring system ranges between 0-4 points with a possible total maximum of 112 points. These points track the levels of biodiversity indicators.[64]
- The High Performance Landscape Guidelines for New York City parks recommends a city-wide climate change impact survey for parks to mitigate and adapt to climate change. More information can be found on page 69 of the document. [65]

One indicator of the City Biodiversity Index is the percentage of tree canopy cover in the designated city. Since River Forest has a 51% canopy coverage, it results in a score of 3 points (must be between 40% - 54.9% to earn 3 points). River Forest has a greater percent of canopy than its neighbors. Source: Chicago Region Trees Initiatives. (2024)[64]

ACTIONS	IMPACT	ADMIN. BURDEN	COST	IMPLEMENTATION TIME
3.5.1	**HIGH -** encourages community participation and responsibility		$$	at least **SEVERAL MONTHS**, not including creating a centralized database.
3.5.2	**HIGH -** as a Biodiversity Index will lead to reducing impacts from extreme weather events.		$	at least **SEVERAL MONTHS** to collect data.

[64] National Parks Board. (2022). The Singapore Index on Cities' Biodiversity. Retrieved from https://www.nparks.gov.sg/biodiversity/urban-biodiversity/the-singapore-index-on-cities-biodiversity

[65] NYC Parks. (n.d.). Design Guidelines: Sustainable Design Practices. Retrieved from https://www.nycgovparks.org/sub_about/go_greener/design_guidelines.pdf

[63] Chicago Region Trees Initiatives. (2024). *River Forest Summary.* Retrieved from https://chicagorti.org/app/uploads/2024/02/RiverForestSummary.pdf

Resiliencey Implementation Guides

3.4.1
Planning process for Mini Forests:

Site selection

Sites for mini-forests can be as small as four parking spaces, or as narrow as 25'. They can be planted in urban parks, university campuses, neighborhoods, and even next to office buildings. These miniature forests are ideal for small urban spaces, privacy barriers, and have been used as windbreaks. Mini-forests are a powerful method to fight climate change and harness the resilience of plants, as these plantings function ecologically like their large forest stand counterparts. The site will determine the size, budget, and how much labor is required for the project.

Engineering the site

Mini-forests are highly engineered landscapes and require soil testing, which can be done through a university extension service. This will aid in determining how to treat the soil. The next step requires a layout design by measuring the extent of the project such as building and existing tree offsets, paths, seating areas, and more. The project will require management for a budget, schedule, materials, and volunteers. There will also need to be a species survey from someone who is a landscape architect or similar background to determine the number of species, density, and layering/ stru cture. The plants can then be sourced from a nursery, and can be sourced from a state run nursery. When planting, seedlings can be planted as close as 18" apart, and mulch.

Maintenance

Following the planting day, the site will require maintenance for two years that includes weeding and replenishing wood chip mulch, and replacing any openings that may appear in the canopy with new plantings. Water during dry periods, and do not prune, fertilize, or treat for disease during the two years of maintenance.

3.4.2
Planning process for Understory Plantings:

Choosing the site

Local forests, such as Thatcher Woods, can serve as examples of what to plant when choosing understory plantings. By analyzing light levels, adding layers of vegetation, and creating woodland soils are crucial to successfully growing understory plants and multiple tiers of vegetation.

Selecting plant varieties:

Plants can vary based on their soil needs and light levels,and there are plenty of resources to find which work best for this region. This can vary depending on the size of the shrub or tree, choosing between perennials and annuals, and other factors that can contribute to their success.

3.5.1
Planning for a climate action impact survey:

- The survey will identify parks, landscaped amenities, and hard infrastructure that is most vulnerable to climate change impacts such as violent storms, invasive species and pests, landscape succession, extreme temperatures, and flooding risks for site's at 50 and 100 year storms.
- Once these high-risk areas are identified, a plan can be developed to direct the best resilience-building strategies to these areas. This assessment can inform decision-making to alter plantings as needed and engineering solutions for issues such as flooding.

3.5.2:
Setting up the Biodiversity Index:

- The first step is creating a profile of the village that includes geographical location, size, population, economic parameters, physical features, biodiversity features, administration, and listing relevant website links.
- The next step is to identify indicators, which include the core components of native biodiversity in the city, ecosystem services provided by biodiversity, and governance and management of biodiversity. Each component will be subject to a point system that can result in a maximum of 112 total points that indicate
- For example, River Forest has a Green View Index (GVI) of 51%, resulting in 3 out of a maximum of 4 points. This point system can provide an incentive to build stronger biodiversity within the village and create a baseline for competitive comparison to other cities using this same measurement strategy.