

2026



Legislative Reference Bureau

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DPW – FORESTRY



2026 Proposed Plan and Executive Budget Review

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Budget Hearing: 10:00 am on Thursday, October 16, 2025

DPW – Forestry

\$15,814,034

Proposed 2026 Budget

+\$534,819

Overall Change from 2025

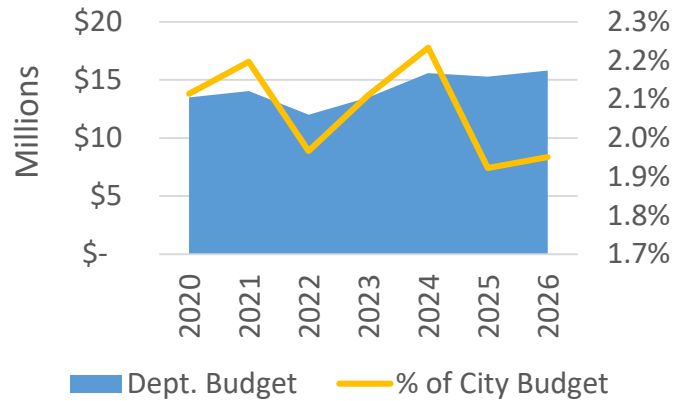
-\$317,057

Difference from Requested

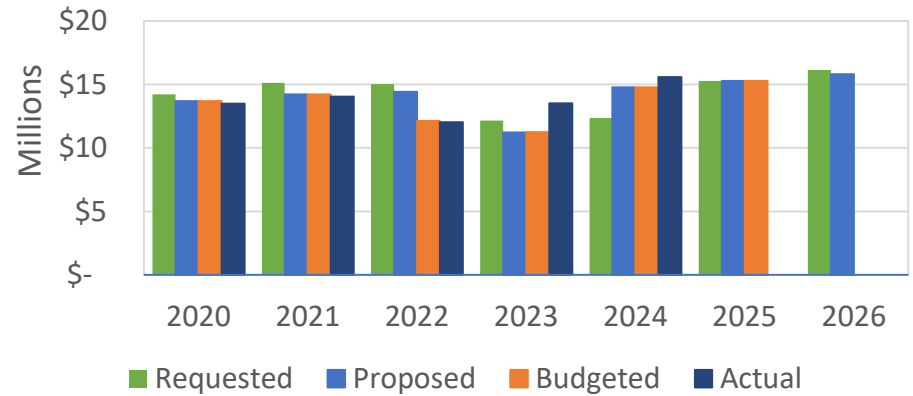
\$16,131,091

Requested 2026 Budget

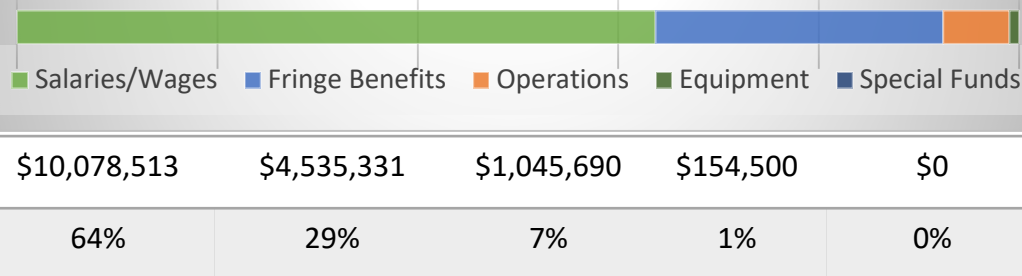
Total Departmental Budget



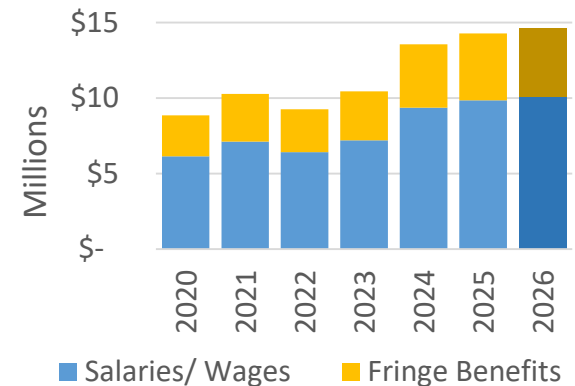
Comparative Funding



Levy Departmental Budget Appropriation by Category



Personnel Budget



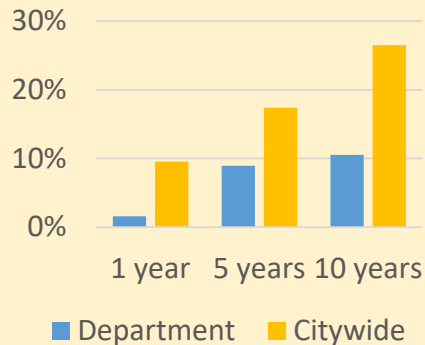
+2.3%

Change in Salaries and Wages
from 2025 Budget.

+\$225,261

Change in Salaries and Wages
from 2025 Budget.

Retirement Eligible



0

Change in Positions

0%

% Change in Positions

15

Current Vacancies

8

Voluntary Separations
In 2025

Staffing Vacancies

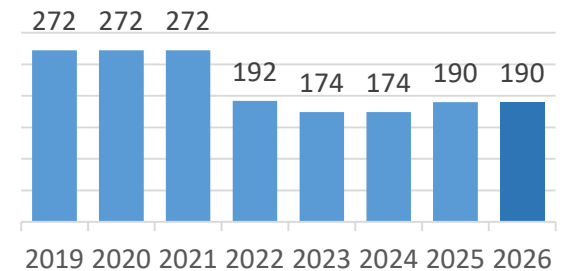
There are currently 15 vacancies in 4 titles, up from 4 vacancies in 3 titles at this time last year. The department has been struggling with pay compression issues specifically in recruiting for the titles of Urban Forestry Crew Leader and Urban Forestry Manager.

Position (Authorized)	Vacant
Urban Forestry Services Manager (1)	1
Urban Forestry Crew Leader (22)	1
Urban Forestry Specialist/UFAA (83)	8
Urban Forestry Worker (21)	5

New Positions

There are no position changes proposed for 2026.

Department Positions



8,300

The approximate number of City ash trees expected to be treated for emerald ash borer in 2026.

6 Years

Inspection cycle for all trees.

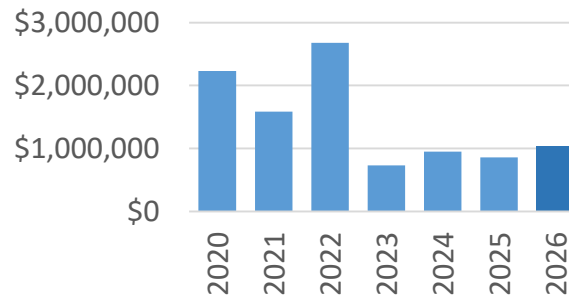
10

The number of mowing cycles for vacant lots proposed for 2026.

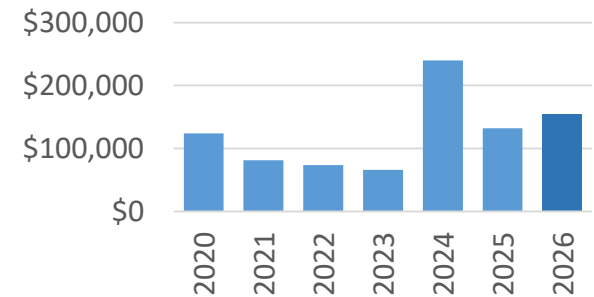
1,800

Projected number of stumps to be carried over into 2026, 120 less than were carried over into 2025.

Operating Expenditures Budget



Equipment Budget



Revenue

A transfer from the Sewer Maintenance Fund will support tree production, planting and pruning.

Other revenue sources include ordered snow and weed removal and other charges related to street tree removals. Actual revenue from these sources can be highly variable.

Special Purpose Accounts

This department has no special purpose accounts.

Capital Programs and Projects

Replace Irrigation Taps	\$420,000
Tree Planting & Production	\$1,500,000
Stump Removal	\$1,300,000
Emerald Ash Borer Program	\$930,000
Hazardous Tree Removal	\$0

Total **\$4,150,000**

All capital projects in Forestry are financed through the Sewer Maintenance Fund.

Grants

The City was awarded a \$12 million forestry grant through the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA). The “USDA Forest Service Urban and Community Forestry Grant” is a multi-year (2024-2028) grant. Sub-recipient agreements are currently being completed for all grant partners.

Work funded by the grant will include tree planting, stumping, pruning, de-paving, ash tree removal and replacements, community education and workforce development.

1.73

Average work hours per tree in 2025, down from 2.68 hours in 2020, because only small trees are regularly pruned.

33.3%

Percentage of Norway Maple trees in the street tree inventory. Down from 42.5% in 2014.

102

Number of properties cited for emerald ash borer to date in 2025, a decrease of 187 properties from 2024.

114%

The replacement ratio for street trees planted in 2024, an improvement from 89% in 2023.

Tree Pruning

In 2021, the department began a new tree maintenance program. The department would inspect all trees every 5 years, pruning any that were smaller than 12" in diameter. Trees larger than 12" in diameter would be pruned as needed and as scheduling allowed.

This maintenance program replaced the previous program which pruned all trees on a regular cycle. The change was prompted largely by a budget-related lengthening of the pruning cycle.

In 2023, the inspection cycle was changed to 6 years. The 2026 Proposed Budget continues the 6-year cycle.

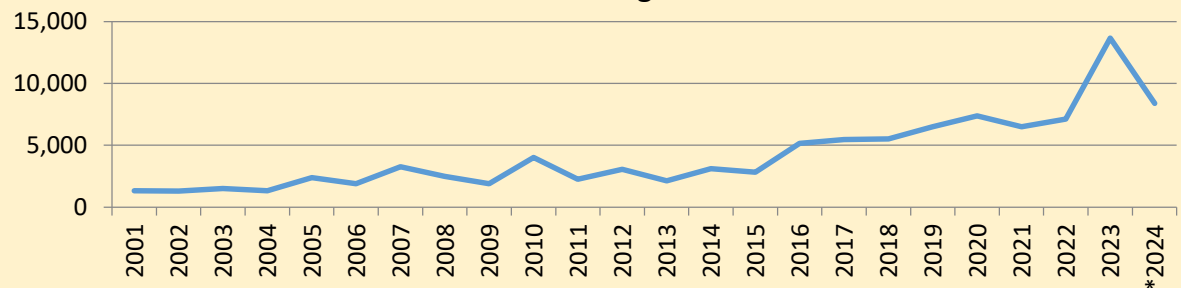
In 2026, the department will continue to use contractors and community-based organizations to increase pruning above the base-line service level.

Grant Applications

Forestry actively pursues grant funding opportunities to enhance the City's urban canopy and provide workforce development opportunities. There are 2 pending grant applications.

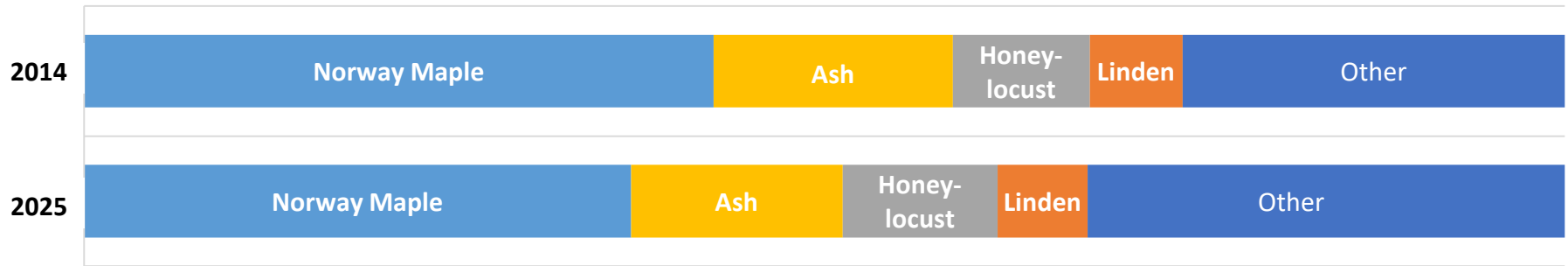
- "Empowering Community Investment in the Urban Tree Canopy", a 2025 WI DNR Urban Forestry Grant. The funding would be used to plant trees on owner-occupied properties in Milwaukee's most disadvantaged neighborhoods. The \$25,000 grant requires an equal match from the City.
- "2025 Great Lakes Restoration Initiative", a USDA Forest Service Grant. This grant would establish 2 mini-forests at 2 City parks located in underserved communities. The department re-applied for this grant.

Storm Damage Calls



*As of October 2024

CHANGE IN STREET TREE DISTRIBUTION



Stumping

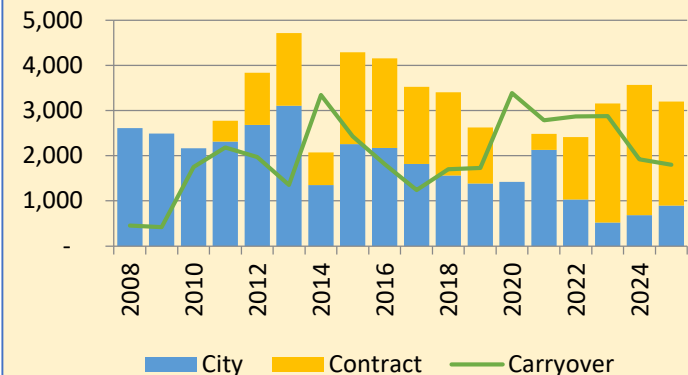
There continues to be a large backlog of stumps to be removed. Forestry carried over 1,919 stumps into 2025. The expected 2025 year-end backlog is about 1,800. The historic average backlog of about 400 stumps began to grow around 2010. Reductions in Urban Forestry FTE's, reductions in funding for seasonal employees, vacancies, participation in snow and ice control operations, and severe weather events were contributing factors.

A backlog of stumps reduces the number of available tree planting spaces, affecting Forestry's ability to plant new trees in a timely manner.

The department has been reducing the backlog with contacted services. Using recent grant funding, the department is training community-based organizations to perform stumping activities. Equipment rental issues, training requirements and flood-related delays have resulted in the removal of fewer stumps than anticipated in 2025.

The Proposed Budget includes \$1.3 million for contracted stump removal to augment work done by City staff. In addition, Milwaukee Community Service Corp. will also perform stumping work, funded by the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) grant.

Stump Removal



Training Crew

The most recent training crew began on June 24, 2024 with 23 Urban Forestry Arborist Apprentices. Twenty Apprentices remain in the program. There is currently a total of 31 Apprentices training in 3 active cohorts. Sixteen participants have graduated from the program. Fourteen graduates remain employed at the City.