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Guidelines to Maintaining the Chicago Parkway

Chicago's parkways play an important role in the livability, vitality and character of our neighborhoods. Many residents choose to beautify the parkway in front of their home by planting flowers and vegetation, and installing fences or stones. However, as the land along the parkway is the property of the city, it is important to follow these guidelines when attempting to modify the traditional appearance of the parkway.

- ✿ Any permanent structure installed in the parkway requires a Public Way Permit issued by the Department of Business Affairs and Licensing. Applications are available at our office or online at cityofchicago.org/businessaffairs. Public Way Permits for parkway improvements are issued free of charge. Please return completed application to this office for approval.
- ✿ Infrastructure maintenance may require city crews to dig up your parkway. Though crews working in the parkway should be able to replace any permanent structures to their original position, the city does not take any responsibility for damages to plants and flowers. We will try to forward any notification of work in your parkway to you, but this may not be possible during emergency situations.
- ✿ Maintaining a traditional parkway with regularly watered and cut grass is most preferred.

Raised Decorative Planters – Good Intentions Gone Bad

Some parkways contain raised stone planters. Though they are installed with the intention of beautifying the parkway, they do more harm than good. Raised planters:



- ✿ Promote the decay of trees by smothering roots and encouraging weak secondary roots, and sprouts off trunk by raising the soil level.
- ✿ May sever roots and destabilize trees.
- ✿ Reduce the area for water runoff and increase the storm water burden on the sewer lines.
- ✿ Oftentimes eliminate the mandatory two foot minimum clearance against the curb lane for vehicle doors. As a result, people parking against the planter are unable to open their doors and are forced to park further out into the street.

Furthermore, the Department of Forestry will not plant trees in existing raised planters and per the above concerns, we will not approve existing or proposed decorative planters which raise the soil level around existing trees or eliminate space for greenery in the parkway.

Proper Parkway Maintenance

- ✿ To assure normal plant growth in the parkway, perform regular maintenance which includes: removal of weeds, mowing, trimming, edging, cultivating, reseeding, controlling of pests and watering.
- ✿ Promptly replace damaged shrubs and ground cover, and immediately notify this office if a tree becomes pest-infested or damaged, or dies.
- ✿ Do not change the elevation of the soil in the parkway in order to keep trees healthy and reduce the storm water burden to the city's sewer lines.
- ✿ If absolutely necessary to protect ground cover, install a low three-sided fence around the parkway after obtaining a Public Way Permit.

