

Oaks of North Lawndale

"It's the little things citizens do. That's what will make the difference. My little thing is planting trees."—
Wangari Maathai, Kenyan environmental activist, and Nobel laureate

Oaks of North Lawndale brings the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, the City of Chicago and the North Lawndale community together to reimagine the neighborhood as a verdant, peaceful and tree-lined place. Inspired by artist Joseph Beuys' *7,000 Oaks* (Germany, 1982), this project aims to address job creation and economic development, environmental improvements, equity issues, and encourage wellbeing by reforesting the 3.2 square miles of the North Lawndale neighborhood.

The North Lawndale neighborhood struggles with the urban complexities of an American city. In addition, this part of the city is also losing its arboreal resources to the invasion of the emerald ash borer beetle. It is against this backdrop that we propose *Oaks of North Lawndale*. This project will be generated out of the Homan Square Campus and spread to the boundaries of North Lawndale, creating a true "city in a garden", as envisioned by Daniel Burnham. It's our hope that these trees and accompanying limestone slabs will be incorporated into the residents' lives in meaningful ways. Some will see it as a point of civic pride. Some will use it as a gathering place. Some will see these trees and stones commemorating times in their lives and the people in them.

Our aim is to welcome collaborators to develop programming that addresses their needs; where collaborators and local businesses can grow and scale alongside the project. Examples of this collaboration are a partnership with the North Lawndale Employment Network on a job training program for at-risk youth; the skills developed via this program aim to create the future workforce for the urban agriculture, landscape construction, and urban forestry industries. With Gardeneers we aim to deliver educational modules supporting classroom learning using *Oaks of North Lawndale* to teach STEAM curriculum.

We believe that the reforestation and the programming that surrounds the tree planting will ultimately have a positive effect on the environment and the health of the residents of North Lawndale. As an enduring commitment to its civic responsibilities, SAIC is the instigator that is developing this project with and for the North Lawndale community.