Arbor Day Foundation™

Friends of Grand Rapids Parks

# ALLIANCE FOR COMMUNITY TREES DAY

## PARTNERS IN COMMUNITY FORESTRY CONFERENCE 2026



# Why “No” is a Great Answer



PRESENTED BY


## BECKY POBST

*Director of Forestry, Friends of Grand Rapids Parks*

becky@friendsofgrparks.org

# Agenda

01

**Predicting**

Predicting denial rates

02

**Communication**

Communication schedules

03

**Stipends**

Compensating neighbors and inviting everyone to participate

04

**Training Volunteers**

Keeping everyone involved on the same page

05

**DATA!**

A look at denial rates over the years

06

**Stay visible, stay available**

We're not leaving just because the trees are planted

# Predicting No's

## Goal of 200+ trees

- On average, we expect 10-20% net denial rates
- We plan for 45%

## Factors that impact denial rates:

- Recent canopy loss
- Level of canopy maintenance

## Residents are the experts of their own homes

We appreciate when they share their expertise with us



# Backup Sites

## Have extra sites to move trees to

- Backup sites will receive flyers just like sites receiving trees, but they won't receive a tree during delivery
- If a house can fit more than 1 tree, only one tree is planned for planting and the others are backup sites. This way if the house declines trees, we only have to find a new location for one, and not multiples
- If a backup site is in front of a home that wanted a tree, they typically call after delivery. We move trees from more industrial locations to theirs, or we order extra trees after the event



# Communication Schedule

## Community meetings

- Meet with neighborhood associations 1 year in advance
- Regularly join neighborhood association meetings
- Schedule pruning events in planting footprint throughout the year

## Flyers

- Postcard goes out 1-1.5 months in advance
- Door flyer goes out 4 weeks in advance
- Yard sign gets staked 2 weeks in advance
- Tree is delivered 1 week in advance with note stapled around trunk



# Volunteers from the Neighborhood

| Date | Shift details | Stipend |
|---|---|---|
| Wednesday, September 23 | **Site leader training**<br>6-7:30pm: Site leader training<br>7:30-8:00pm: Stipend paperwork | $50 |
| Friday, September 25 | **Tree planting volunteer**<br>12:30pm: Stipend paperwork<br>1-4pm: Tree planting shift | $75 |
| Saturday, September 26 | **Tree planting volunteer**<br>8:30am-9am: Stipend paperwork<br>9am-12pm: Tree planting shift | $75 |
| Bonus for attending all trainings and all shifts! | | $50 |

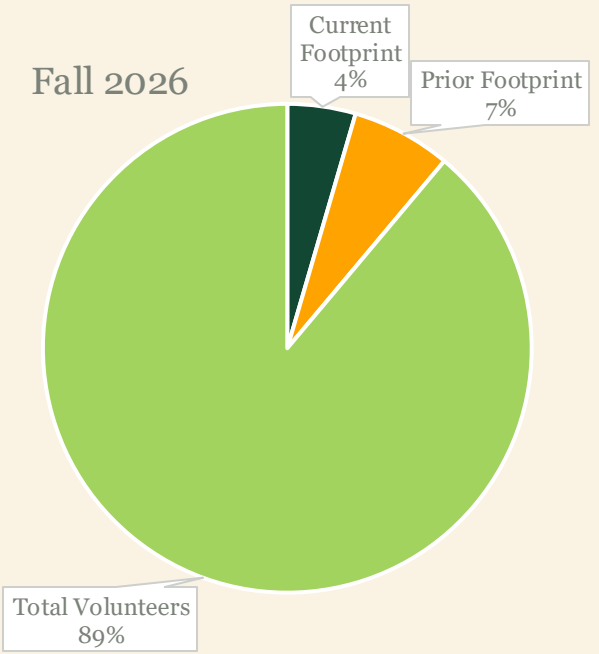
We offer stipends to residents from the neighborhood we're currently planting in, as well as prior planting years

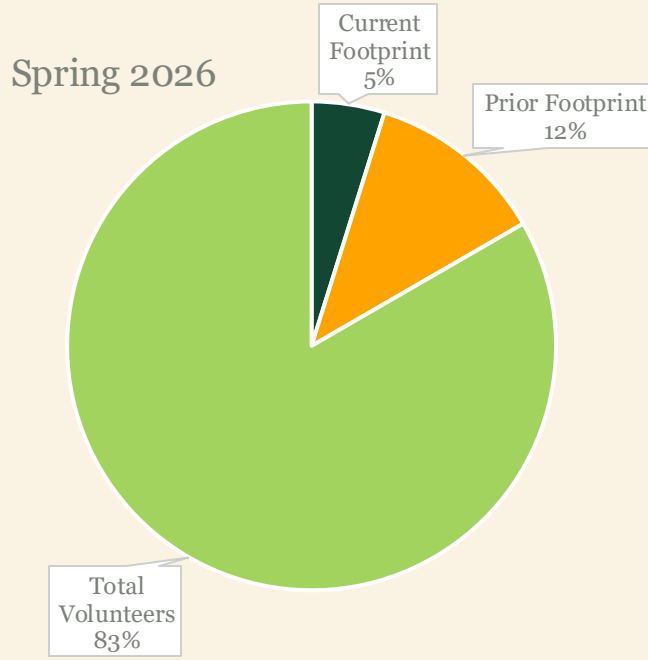
Residents may receive as much as $250 for participating in the event, either as volunteer or a Site Leader

Stipends are incorporated into our grant proposals and donor/sponsorship packages

# Volunteers from the Neighborhood





# Organizing the Data

## Tree Denials

People who have requested we do not plant a tree, or staff has decided after utility marking that it's not an acceptable site

## Tree Requests

People are requesting a tree, or a specific species or characteristic

## Swaps

Adjustments to species based on feedback from residents

| Name | Contact Info | Address | Request/Denial/Swap | Status | Zone:Site | Species | Notes | Moved To/From Zone:Site |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| [redacted] | [redacted] | [redacted] Griggs | Request | Good | 0:3 | | Resident requested replacement tree during summer GT | 17:7 |
| [redacted] | [redacted] | [redacted] Godwin | Request | Good | 0:1 | | Resident requested tree during summer GT | |
| [redacted] | [redacted] | [redacted] Storrs | Request | Good | 0:2 | | Resident requested replacement tree during summer GT. Wants quick shade, previous tree died and was removed | |
| [redacted] | [redacted] | [redacted] Jefferson Ave SE | Denial | Good | 14:8 | Alleghany Serviceberry 1.5" | Residentr emailed after flyering | 14:7 |
| [redacted] | [redacted] | [redacted] Collins Ave SE | Denial | Good | 15:10 | Ivory Silk Lilac 1.5" | Resident emailed after flyering | 15:11 |
| [redacted] | [redacted] | [redacted] Lafayette | Request | Good | 16:9 | Eastern Redbud 1.5" | Resident emailed after flyering. Giving redbud instead of SB because Arbv in private property | |
| [redacted] | [redacted] | [redacted] Union Ave SE | Denial | Good | 19:16 | Ivory Silk Lilac 1.5" | Resident called after flyering. SO sweet. "Thank you for giving us the option!" | 19:18 |
| [redacted] | [redacted] | [redacted] Francis Ave SE | Denial | Good | 9:21 | BACKUP | Resident called after flyering | |
| n/a | N/A | [redacted] Home St SE | Request | Good | 1:8 | BACKUP | Resident requested while door flyering | 1:9 |
| N/A | N/A | [redacted] Cass Ave SE | Denial | Good | 5:2 | New Harmony Elm 1.5" | Resident denied while door flyering | 5:18 |
| N/A | N/A | [redacted] Cass Ave SE | Staff D... | Good | 5:3 | BACKUP | Gaby denied, no space | |
| N/A | N/A | [redacted] Prospect Ave SE | Staff D... | Good | 6:15 | Ivory Silk Lilac 1.5" | Gaby denied, no space | 6:9 |

# Training Staff and Volunteers

## Staff

Everyone on staff has a script to be able to help the resident as much as possible when calls come in. Forestry staff follows up after

## Site Leaders

Volunteers who go through extra training to lead groups. They know that “no” is perfectly fine, even if the tree is planted already

## Volunteers

They hear it multiple times before planting that we always accept “no.” They find their site leader if a resident comes out to decline a tree



Site Leader Packet

Friends of Grand Rapids Parks

# Zone 1

| ADDRESS | STREET | ZONE | SITE_NUM | TREE SIZE | TREE SPECIES | PLANTED? | NOTES |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| [redacted] | | 1 | 1 | Medium | **BACKUP** | ☐ | Small stump |
| [redacted] | | 1 | 2 | Large | Skyline Honeylocust | ☐ | Small stump |
| [redacted] | | 1 | 3 | Large | **DENIAL** | ☐ | |
| [redacted] | | 1 | 4 | Small | **BACKUP** | ☐ | |
| [redacted] | | 1 | 5 | Large | Kentucky Coffeetree | ☐ | Small stump |
| [redacted] | | 1 | 6 | Small | **DENIAL** | ☐ | |
| [redacted] | | 1 | 7 | Medium | Artmstrong Maple | ☐ | REQUEST |
| [redacted] | | 1 | 8 | Small | Autumn Brilliance Serviceberry | ☐ | * DEMO TREE. REQUEST |
| [redacted] | | 1 | 9 | Small | Alleghany Serviceberry | ☐ | * DEMO TREE |
| [redacted] | | 1 | 10 | Small | **DENIAL** | ☐ | |
| [redacted] | | 1 | 11 | Small | Raspberry Spear Crabapple | ☐ | |
| [redacted] | | 1 | 12 | Large | White Oak | ☐ | |

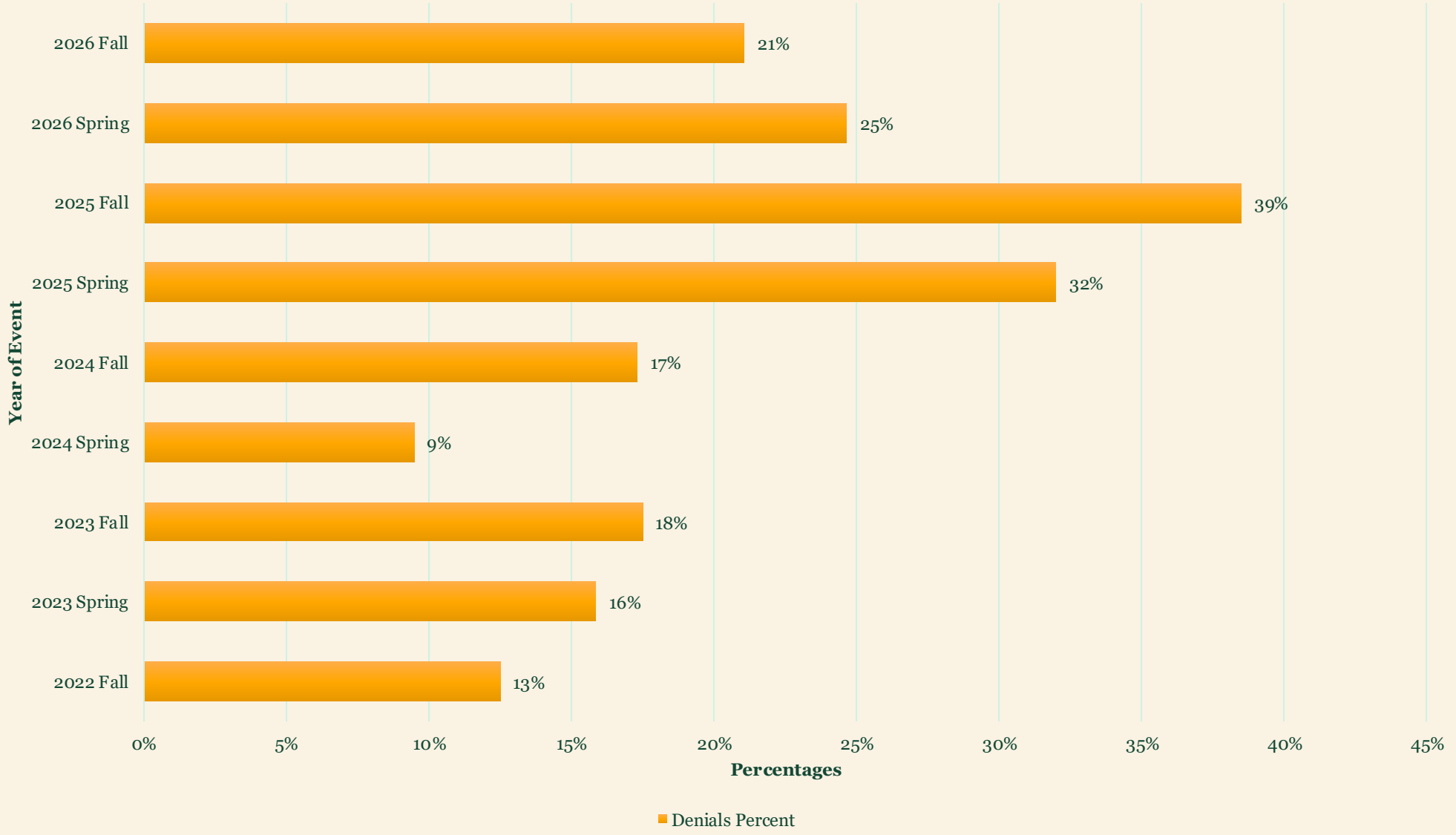


# DENIAL RATES

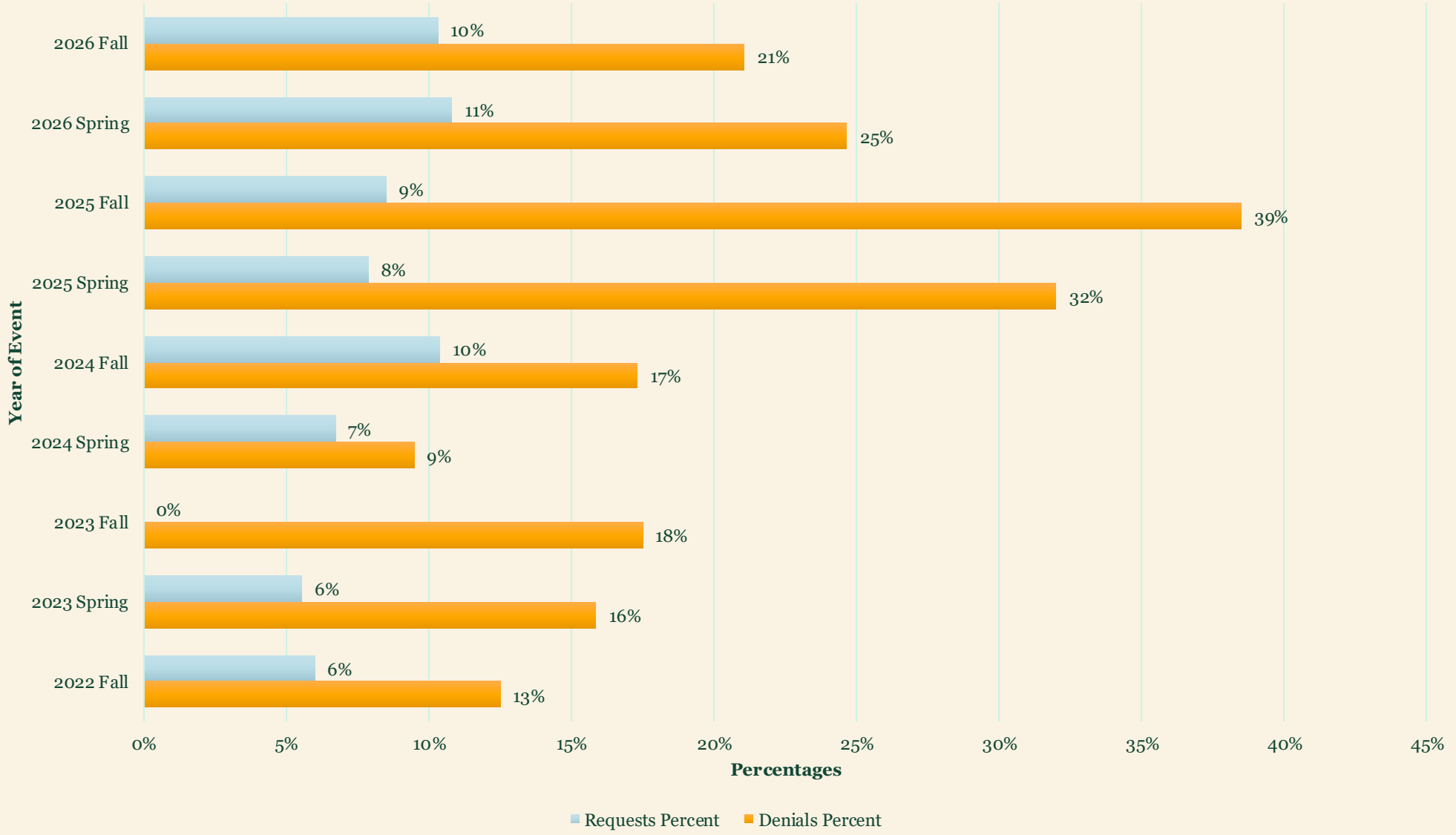
How our denial rates relate to request rates and what it means by neighborhood



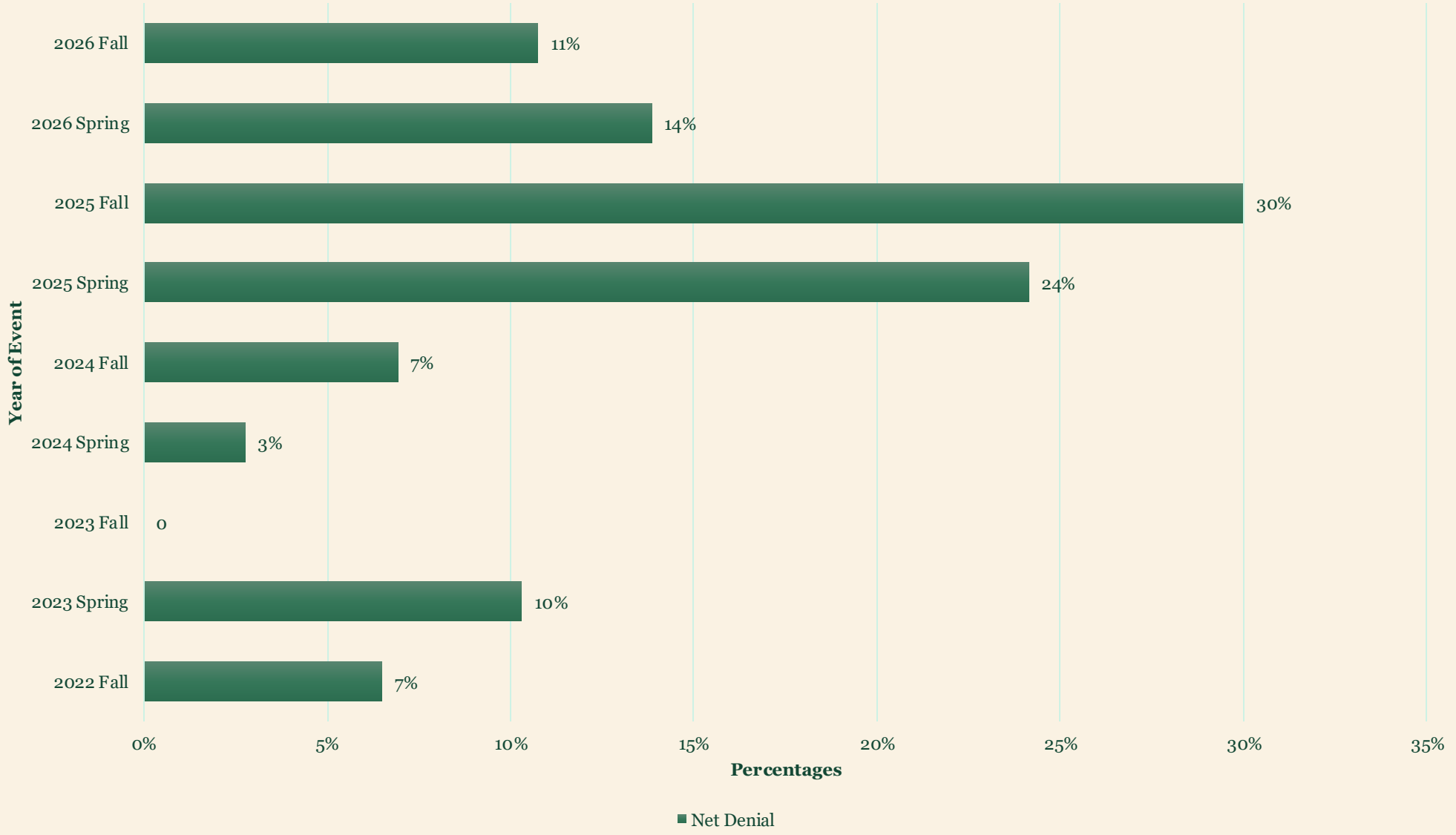
# Tree Denial Rates



# Tree Denials and Requests



# Tree Net Denial Rate




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# Key Takeaways

- Tree denials are always an opportunity to connect
- Compensate your community
- Stay visible, stay available
- Every step of the way, the goal is to let them know you care

Alliance for Community Trees
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# Thank you.

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