



## Legislation Text

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**File #:** 1406-2023, **Version:** 1

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**Background:** In April of 2021, the Columbus Recreation and Parks Commission voted in support of and Columbus City Council passed a resolution to support the Columbus Urban Forestry Master Plan (UFMP) and its immediate implementation. By authorizing the implementation of the Urban Forestry Master Plan, the Forestry Section of the Recreation and Parks Department can implement key recommendations through hiring staff, purchasing equipment, procuring tree service contracts, inventorying the City's street trees, designing a new facility for Forestry's North Zone, and engaging urban forestry consultants.

This ordinance is requesting the authorization of \$1,500,000.00 in voted bond funds and the authorization for the Director of Recreation and Parks to enter into various contracts relating to the Urban Forestry Master Plan. This ordinance will establish auditor's certificates and authorize expenditures in conjunction with the management of the UFMP. Contracts will be entered in compliance with the relevant provisions of Columbus City Code Chapter 329, however this legislation will set up all of the funding required to enter into contracts with vendors on an as-needed basis. All purchases will be through competitive bidding, through any current universal term contract, or through any current State of Ohio purchasing contract pre-approved by the City of Columbus Purchasing Office, per Ordinance No. 0582-87.

The staffing, supplies, services, and equipment needs that will be paid for as part of this funding request may include, but are not limited to, tree installation, hazardous tree removal, stump grinding, tree site preparation, urban forestry professional services, cellular service, office supplies, forestry supplies, uniforms, and safety equipment. All supply, service, and equipment needs related to the UFMP have been established as one overall capital improvement project. Each purchase order will be written separately based on all City of Columbus Codes that apply.

The Columbus Urban Forestry Master Plan is the first citywide strategic plan to invest long-term in Columbus' trees. Over the next decades, the UFMP will guide the entire Columbus Community to prioritize, preserve, and grow our tree canopy. Tree canopy refers to the part of a city that is shaded by trees. Canopy cover is the percentage of the city that is covered by trees when viewed from above, as opposed to other land cover like water, open green space, hard surfaces and bare soil. In Columbus, approximately 22% of the city is currently covered by trees.

Columbus faces many challenges today, and over the coming decades. Trees are part of the solution. Trees help reduce urban stressors by cleaning our air, providing shade, intercepting stormwater, and more. The benefits that urban trees provide is valued up to five times what it costs to maintain them. In Columbus, our trees provide approximately 38 million dollars in benefits each year. However, our tree canopy is vulnerable to threats from disease, pests, the changing climate, and increased development. Also, the City is expecting to grow by 1 million residents in the coming decades. To improve and sustain our residents' quality of life, we needed a strategic plan to invest in our trees.

We engaged residents across Columbus through five avenues, including an online survey, an open house, small-group presentations, interviews, and multiple meetings of two stakeholder groups. These two stakeholder groups were comprised of over 100 community leaders and City of Columbus Staff. The themes that emerged were used to develop the vision, goals, and actions of the Urban Forestry Master Plan. The vision of the Urban Forestry Master Plan is to prioritize, preserve, and grow the tree canopy in Columbus, equitably across neighborhoods, to improve the health and quality of life for all residents.

The Urban Forestry Master Plan has three goals. One is a long-term goal and the other two are short-term goals. All are critical to achieving our vision for Columbus' urban forest. These goals are as follows:

- Goal 1: Reach Citywide Tree Canopy Cover of 40% by 2050.
- Goal 2: Stop the Net Tree Canopy Losses by 2030.
- Goal 3: Invest in Equitable Tree Canopy Across All Neighborhoods by 2030.

To reach our goals, we will follow four strategies, including community coordination and collaboration; best practices, dedication of resources, and stronger policies.

**Benefits to the Public:** Trees provide tangible benefits to Columbus residents. As the 15th largest city in the nation, Columbus is home to over 900,000 people. Columbus had the 8th most intense urban heat island effect of major US cities, impacting health, energy use, and water quality. The recently published Columbus Climate Action Plan recommends planting trees as a solution. Street trees are the workhorses as they clean our air, reduce heat, and absorb stormwater. In an Ohio summer, trees provide the shade that makes walking outside bearable. Trees should be equitably distributed across the City so all residents benefit.

**Community Input/Issues:** Hundreds of stakeholders helped create the Urban Forestry Master Plan. Industry experts, universities, nonprofits, developers, community leaders, city staff, regional partners, landscape architects, and many others served on two stakeholder groups consisting of a Project Team of about 30 members and an Advisory Group of about 100 members. All members are listed in the Acknowledgments section of the UFMP and on the UFMP website. The UFMP website is located at [www.columbusufmp.org](http://www.columbusufmp.org). These groups met periodically throughout the course of the plan's creation to provide input. The public was also engaged through an online survey, an open house, small-group presentations, and interviews.

**Area(s) Affected:** Citywide (99)

**Master Plan Relation:** This project will support the Recreation and Parks Master Plan by conserving, protecting, and enhancing the city's natural resources and overall environmental health. The UFMP will benefit current and future generations.

**Fiscal Impact:** \$1,500,000.00 is budgeted and available from within the Recreation and Parks Voted Bond Fund 7702 to meet the financial obligations of these various expenditures.

To authorize the Director of the Department of Recreation and Parks to enter into various contracts for management of the Urban Forestry Master Plan; to authorize and direct the City Auditor to establish auditor's certificates in the amount of \$1,500,000.00 for various expenditures in conjunction with the management of the Urban Forestry Master Plan; and to authorize the expenditure of \$1,500,000.00 from the Recreation and Parks Voted Bond Fund. (\$1,500,000.00)

**WHEREAS,** it is necessary that the City Auditor establish auditor's certificates in the amount of \$1,500,000.00 for various expenditures in conjunction with the management of the Urban Forestry Master Plan; and

**WHEREAS,** it is necessary to authorize the expenditure of \$1,500,000.00 from the Recreation and Parks Voted Bond Fund 7702;

**WHEREAS,** it has become necessary in the usual daily operations of the Recreation and Parks Department in that it is necessary to authorize the Director to enter into various contracts for the management of the Urban Forestry Master Plan,  
**NOW, THEREFORE**

**BE IT ORDAINED BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF COLUMBUS:**

**SECTION 1.** That the Director of Recreation and Parks be and is hereby authorized to enter into various contracts for the purchase of services, equipment, supplies, and trees as necessary in conjunction with the management of the Urban

Forestry Master Plan as described by this ordinance. This ordinance will also authorize the reimbursement of staff time related to the implementation of the Urban Forestry Master Plan in accordance with the City Auditor's internal labor capitalization policy.

**SECTION 2.** That the City Auditor is hereby authorized and directed to establish auditor's certificates in the amount of \$1,500,000.00 for various expenditures in conjunction with the management of the Urban Forestry Master Plan.

**SECTION 3.** That the funds necessary to carry out the purpose of this ordinance are hereby deemed appropriated, and the City Auditor shall establish such accounting codes as necessary.

**SECTION 4.** That the City Auditor is authorized to make any accounting changes to revise the funding source for all contracts or contract modifications associated with this ordinance.

**SECTION 5.** That the City Auditor is hereby authorized to transfer the unencumbered balance in a project account to the unallocated balance account within the same fund upon receipt of certification by the Director of the Department administering said project that the project has been completed and the monies are no longer required for said project.

**SECTION 6.** For the purpose stated in Section 1, the expenditure of \$1,500,000.00 or so much thereof as may be necessary to pay the cost thereof, be and is hereby authorized from the Recreation and Parks Voted Bond Fund 7702 in object class 06 Capital Outlay per the accounting codes in the attachments to this ordinance.

**SECTION 7.** That this Council hereby recognizes that this ordinance does not identify specific contractors or vendors for the expenditure purposes authorized herein and hereby delegates sole and final contracting decisions relative to the determination of lowest, best, most responsive and most responsible vendor(s) to the Director of Recreation and Parks. All contracts will be entered into in compliance with the relevant provisions of the Columbus City Code, Chapter 329.

**SECTION 8.** That this ordinance shall take effect and be in force from and after the earliest period allowed by law.