



Legislation Text

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A 2015 Urban Tree Canopy Assessment found that 22% of Columbus is covered with trees and recommended a strategic plan to grow the tree canopy. The Urban Forestry Master Plan is a strategic and long-term investment in Columbus' tree canopy. The process to create the Urban Forestry Master Plan officially started in October 2019. Hundreds of stakeholders helped create the Urban Forestry Master Plan. Industry experts, universities, nonprofits, developers, community leaders, city staff and leadership, regional partners, landscape architects and many others served on two stakeholder groups: a Project Team of about 30 members and an Advisory Group of about 100 members. 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.

The Urban Forestry Master Plan has three goals which are critical to achieving our vision for Columbus' urban forest.

Goal 1: Reach Citywide Tree Canopy Cover of 40% by 2050.

Goal 2: Stop the Net Canopy Losses by 2030.

Goal 3: Invest in Equitable Canopy Across All Neighborhoods by 2030.

Emergency Justification: To realize the benefits to the environment and to residents of a healthy tree canopy as soon as possible by supporting the immediate implementation of the recommendations and action items within the Urban Forestry Master Plan to preserve and grow Columbus's tree canopy and to equitably address the tree coverage disparity between neighborhoods.

To Support the Immediate Implementation of the Columbus Recreation and Parks Department's Urban Forestry Master Plan, and to declare an emergency.

WHEREAS, the Columbus Recreation and Parks Department spent eighteen months evaluating Columbus's trees and gathering community input to guide an overall strategy to invest in the city's urban forest; and

WHEREAS, preserving and expanding the city's urban forest in every neighborhood is a critical investment for the future, especially for neighborhoods that need additional tree coverage the most; and

WHEREAS, the Urban Forestry Master Plan clearly lays out current challenges, public perception, findings on the state of the urban forest, and actions steps to guide the City of Columbus's path forward, including prioritizing social equity factors to ensure a focus on neighborhoods that would benefit most from increased tree coverage; and

WHEREAS, a healthy tree canopy improves air quality, prevents erosion and storm runoff, reduces the urban heat island effect, lowers utility bills for residents, helps mitigate the impacts of climate change, and makes Columbus a healthier and more beautiful place to live; and

WHEREAS, an emergency exists in the daily operations of the City of Columbus to immediately implement the recommendations and action items within the Urban Forestry Master Plan in order to equitably address the tree coverage disparity between neighborhoods, now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF COLUMBUS

Section 1. That this Council does hereby support the immediate implementation of the Columbus Recreation and Parks Department's Urban Forestry Master Plan.

Section 2. That for the reason stated in the preamble hereto, which is hereby made a part hereof, this ordinance is hereby declared to be an emergency measure and shall take effect and be in force from and after its passage and approval by the Mayor, or ten days after passage if the Mayor neither approves nor vetoes the same.