



Legislation Text

File #: 0721-2024, **Version:** 1

Background: This ordinance authorizes the Director of the Recreation and Parks Department to enter into a grant agreement with the Ohio Department of Natural Resource (ODNR) for the Urban Forestry Grant Program. This ordinance will also authorize the appropriation of the grant in the amount of \$500,000.00.

The Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR) solicited competitive proposals for the Urban Forestry grant program and the Columbus Recreation and Parks Department submitted the grant application in December 2023. This Urban Forestry grant is a reimbursable grant that supports long-term growth and development of local urban and community forest programs. A requirement of the program is a focus on disadvantaged communities defined by The Council on Environmental Quality's Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool (CEJST).

The goals of the Urban Forestry Grant Program align with the City's Urban Forestry Master Plan (UFMP). ODNR awarded \$500,000.00 to the City of Columbus Recreation and Parks Department for tree plantings within the project area. The City intends to utilize these grant funds to plant approximately 1,250 large-class street trees. The plantings will directly support the UFMP goal of investing in equitable canopy across all neighborhoods by 2030, focusing on neighborhoods with low tree canopy and high social equity needs. The census tracts identified for planting through the Climate and Economic Justice screening tool are also ranked as either high or very high priorities in the UFMP Social Equity Needs Index, meaning these tracts have low tree canopy and high need for new trees.

Principal Parties:

Ohio Department of Natural Resources
2045 Morse Road, Building H-1
Columbus, Ohio 43229
Carrie Morrow, (614) 265-6509
Contract Compliance Number: 005089
Contract Compliance Expiration Date: N/A (State of Ohio Agency)

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. 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 for current and future generations.

Fiscal Impact: This ordinance will authorize the appropriation of \$500,000.00 in grant funds in the Recreation and Parks Grant Fund 2283. Future legislation will be prepared to expend these funds once the project is ready to move forward.

To authorize the Director of Recreation and Parks to enter into a grant agreement with the Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR) for the Urban Forestry Grant Program and to accept a grant in the amount of \$500,000.00; and to authorize the appropriation of \$500,000.00 in the Recreation and Parks Grant Fund. (\$500,000.00)

WHEREAS, Ordinance No. 3548-2023 authorized the Director of Recreation and Parks to apply for funding through the Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR) Urban Forestry Grant Program and ODNR has awarded the City of Columbus a grant for street tree planting; and

WHEREAS, it is necessary to authorize and direct the Director of Recreation and Parks to accept a grant in the amount of \$500,000.00 and enter into an agreement with the Ohio Department of Natural Resources for the Urban Forestry Grant Program; and

WHEREAS, it is necessary to authorize the appropriation of \$500,000.00 to the Recreation and Parks Grant Fund;
NOW, THEREFORE

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

SECTION 1. That the Director of Recreation and Parks is authorized and directed to accept a grant and enter into a grant agreement with the Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR) for the Urban Forestry Grant Program. The amount of the grant is \$500,000.00. Future legislation will be prepared to expend these funds once the project is ready to move forward.

SECTION 2. That from the unappropriated monies and from all monies estimated to come into said fund from any and all sources and unappropriated for any other purpose during the fiscal year ending December 31, 2024, the sum of \$500,000.00 is appropriated to the Recreation and Parks Grant Fund 2283 per the account codes in the attachment to this ordinance. Appropriation effective upon receipt of executed grant agreement.

SECTION 3. That at the end of the grant period, any repayment of unencumbered balances required by the grantor is hereby authorized and any unused City match monies may be transferred back to the City fund from which they originated in accordance with all applicable grant agreements.

SECTION 4. 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 5. 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 6. 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 7. That this ordinance shall take effect and be in force from and after the earliest period allowed by law.