



Legislation Text

File #: 47689, **Version:** 1

Fiscal Note

The proposed resolution establishes an Urban Forestry Taskforce. No expenditure is required at this time. Forestry staff will be primarily responsible for staffing the task force with existing resources. Strategies and recommendations may eventually have capital and operating impact on various departments, subject to future Common Council approval.

Title

Establishing an Urban Forestry Taskforce to make recommendations to the Mayor and the Common Council regarding the promotion of a vibrant, healthy and sustainable urban forest and tree canopy.

Body

Whereas, a healthy, dense and varied population of canopy trees provides many important benefits for our city. Their shade mitigates urban heat and cools buildings, reduces energy use and stores large amounts of carbon. They reduce stormwater run-off, improve air quality and abate urban noise. Trees improve the streetscape and increase property values. Studies have shown that canopy trees reduce stress levels, slow traffic, and create outdoor environments which encourage people to get outdoors, walk and bike and stay more active - all of which encourage better health. These benefits must be considered in calculating the costs of preserving and maintaining our urban forest.

Whereas, Madison's Sustainability Plan, adopted in 2012, calls for the City to:

“Minimize loss of tree cover and green space in public rights of way;

Promote, expand and replace tree canopy trees whenever possible and encourage landowner collaboration on strengthening tree canopy and woodlands;

Create a policy to facilitate underground placement of power lines and overhead wires.”

Whereas, a 35-inch Ash tree provides overall benefits of: \$191 every year. It can intercept 3,764 gallons of storm water runoff this year. It can conserve 321 Kilowatt hours of electricity for cooling and reduce consumption of oil or natural gas by 47 therm(s).

Whereas, the Forestry Section of the Parks Division provides tree planting, pruning and maintenance for over 96,000 trees along Madison's 700 miles of city streets. In addition, Forestry is responsible for hundreds of thousands of trees located in the City's parks, golf courses and cemetery.

Whereas, while Madison's tree canopy is managed by City Forestry, its viability is determined by a wide range of policies, ordinances and practices and overseen by several City agencies, including Parks, Engineering, Public Works, Streets, Zoning, Fire and Planning as well as utility companies' pruning programs

Whereas, city street development and reconstruction can lead to loss of many mature canopy trees. Current design standards for streetscapes do not always provide optimal soil volume or set-backs for planting canopy trees.

Whereas, other threats to the survival of existing or planned canopy trees are posed by salt, vehicles, improper mowing and weed-whackers, fire truck clearance, underground utilities, bike racks, street lights and signs.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Mayor and Common Council direct the creation of a taskforce on Urban Forestry that will be comprised of the following department/division heads or their representatives and other members. The taskforce shall be staffed by the Parks Division and chaired by a resident member of the taskforce.

- Two Alderpersons
- Four Residents Appointed by the Mayor
- Parks Division / Forestry
- Engineering
- Planning & Zoning
- Other City Departments as determined necessary by the taskforce

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the taskforce shall conduct and complete the following actions/duties:

- Review available research and best practices on promoting a vibrant, healthy, and sustainable urban forest.

- Review City policies, practices, programs, and operations that impact the urban forest (e.g. Zoning Code, Emerald Ash Borer Mitigation Plan).

- Solicit input from local stakeholders with additional information on the issue as needed (e.g. WI DNR).

- Develop recommendations to the Mayor, Common Council, Committees or Commissions, and/or City agencies on the establishment of a Canopy Coverage Goal and action plan for the city covering both public and private trees.

- Develop recommendations to the Mayor, Common Council, Committees or Commissions, and/or City agencies to preserve and expand our urban forest resources through a well-planned and systematic approach to tree management.

- Develop recommendations to encourage private landowners to protect, preserve and promote a diverse and sustainable urban forest.

- Provide guidance for a long-term strategy to departments to promote the sustainability of a healthy urban forest.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED, that the taskforce complete its review and make final recommendations to the Mayor and Common Council within one year of its initial meeting.