

RESOLUTION NO.

WHEREAS, Austin’s urban trees provide a range of benefits that are vital to human health and livelihood; and

WHEREAS, the United States Forest Service estimates that in the United States, tree absorption of carbon dioxide alone is worth \$50.5 billion annually and growing; and

WHEREAS, the 2006 Tree Task Force recommended that the Austin City Council “recognize trees as essential urban infrastructure”; and

WHEREAS, the Imagine Austin Comprehensive Plan includes 69 mentions of urban forestry items, as well as 20 urban forest-related priority actions, and identifies as Priority Program No. 4 the use of “green infrastructure to protect environmentally sensitive areas and integrate nature into the city”; and

WHEREAS, the cities of Houston and San Antonio have invested in studies to evaluate the financial benefits of urban trees; and

WHEREAS, a comprehensive measurement of the services and benefits provided by our city’s trees would be an important tool for comparing the costs and benefits of man-made infrastructure’s capacity to provide equivalent services; and

WHEREAS, many assessment tools exist at little or no cost to measure the value of the services and benefits of trees; and

WHEREAS, a City of Austin audit of the Parks and Recreation Department’s Forestry Department in August of 2012 found that “key elements of a successful forestry program are not in place,” and that the lack

of operational efficiencies hindered the “effective management of the urban forest”; and

WHEREAS, the 2013-14 General Fund Unmet Service Demands report suggests that the current fiscal year’s budget does not adequately fund the staff and resources necessary to provide comprehensive urban forest management functions; **NOW, THEREFORE**,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF AUSTIN:

The City Manager is directed to assess the value and benefits that public trees provide to the community and to various municipal functions, such as urban heat island reduction and stormwater management. This assessment should be performed using existing city resources to the greatest extent feasible and should quantify the value and benefits of both street and non-street public trees.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

The City Manager will evaluate the adequacy of the current level of care provided by all city departments with tree-related programs and activities and shall evaluate whether each program can provide the care necessary to preserve and maintain this infrastructure.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

The City Manager shall consider adjustments to tree-related service delivery that could prove more efficient and cost effective, including potential consolidation and/or repositioning of tree-related programs as well as expanded funding opportunities such as the use of enterprise funds, existing environmental fees and assessments, and multi-departmental cost sharing.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

The City Manager shall document the results and findings of the assessment and alternatives and shall provide recommendations to the City Council by March 21, 2014.

ADOPTED:_____, 2013 **ATTEST:**_____

Jannette S. Goodall
City Clerk