

Community Tree Preservation Division

FY19 Budget Request – Community Tree Resiliency

September 5, 2018

Background

The Urban Forestry Program in the Development Services Department is responsible for implementing Austin's Urban Forest Plan (adopted by City Council in 2014). The scope of this program includes:

- Environmental education + outreach
- Resources for community based urban forest stewardship
- Urban forest health monitoring + planning

Budget Request Summary

Climate change and resilience is a top priority indicator for City Council's Health and Environment strategic outcome. The Urban Forestry Program is currently developing an Urban Forest Health initiative that includes city-wide monitoring of oak wilt and planning for the approach of the invasive and destructive forest health pest Emerald Ash Borer. This proposal seeks to expand the reach of the Urban Forest Health initiative to increase the resiliency of our community trees to climate change (extreme heat, drought, flooding, and wildfire).

Two (2) Full Time Employees are requested. These staff will lead city-wide planning, coordination, and engagement activities and will leverage existing programs and partners to meet our community tree resiliency goals. Key support staff for this issue is critical to Austin's ability to meet the challenges presented by a changing climate and to maintain the livability of Austin.

Goals include:

- Community engagement and participation
- Leveraging resources through partnerships and collaboration
- Resiliency and disaster preparation planning, storm recovery

Anticipated outcomes include:

- Increased tree canopy cover + associated benefits
- Increased city-wide resiliency to climate change
- Actionable implementation strategies for public and private property

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Date 5/11/2018

Describe the proposal in detail, including the goals of the proposal, anticipated outcomes, and a timeline for implementation.

This proposal would constitute an additional three FTEs, funding for two temporary employees, contract funding, and a transfer from the General Fund to support non-fee related activity - all of which will aid the implementation of Austin's Urban Forest Plan, adopted by City Council in 2014.

Trees are a valuable component of our community's infrastructure, and are impacted by both biotic (such as people, pests, and diseases) and abiotic (such as floods, fire, and other climate related threats) factors. This proposal seeks to mitigate the negative impacts associated with climate change such as extreme heat, drought, flooding, and wildfire. We also seek to mitigate threats to our urban forest related to enforcement of the city's tree code, which requires review and inspection of dead and dying trees. The goals of this proposal include increased resiliency and preservation of the community's trees, tree planting and care, improve community engagement, education, outreach, and leverage resources through partnerships and collaboration.

The goals can be achieved through four (4) primary activities: 1) facilitating the creation and implementation of public land management and stewardship plans by partnering with local nonprofits and community groups; 2) developing and implementing city-wide urban forest climate change adaptation strategies; 3) increasing tree code enforcement through additional environmental inspection staff and contracts; 4) reviewing and inspecting of dead and dying trees to maintain forest health. Key city partners to this proposal include the Office of Sustainability and Parks and Recreation Department.

The anticipated outcomes of this proposal are an increased city-wide resiliency to climate change and increased tree canopy cover. Additional outcomes include the creation of an actionable implementation strategy for public and private property for climate resiliency, increased stewardship of public land, an enhanced effectiveness of tree regulations, the creation of a public land management and stewardship plan, reforestation, and urban forest maintenance. Finally, it is expected that an urban forest climate change adaptation plan, disaster preparation, and storm recovery program will be created.

The timeline for implementation of this proposal includes the hiring of staff, completion of public engagement, and development of a program framework to be completed in Fiscal Year 2019. In Fiscal Year 2020, it is anticipated that the comprehensive program would be operational.

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Please provide detailed, quantitative projections as to how this proposal will positively impact any of the strategic plan metrics listed in the related Request for Budget Proposal.

City of Austin carbon footprint: This metric will be decreased (positive impact).

When trees are planted on public property, the City has the ability to utilize the carbon offset by the planting of new trees to offset the community's carbon footprint. Furthermore, by caring for existing trees, their useful lifespan will be extended thereby allowing existing trees to store more carbon for a longer period of time.

Number and percentage of properties whose exposure to [climate] risk have decreased due to City efforts:

this metric will be positively impacted. A key goal of this proposal is tied to planning actionable strategies to make public property more resilient to impacts such as these. Professional land management staff working alongside community members and City departments to establish goals and implement them will cause both public facilities to have a decreased risk, and allow community members to apply lessons learned back to their own properties, thereby potentially reducing the risk on private properties.

Percentage of Austin's total land area covered by the tree canopy: this metric will be positively influenced.

DSD anticipates land management and stewardship planning to focus on site level challenges relevant to both neighborhood and land managers. Increasing tree canopy through tree planting and care for existing trees is a key component of this metric.

Please explain how this proposal will substantively advance one or more of the related strategies or "council context" items listed in the related Request for Budget Proposal.

The relevant council context item that will be advanced is: "managing flood and wildfire risks and developing mitigation plans". This proposal aims to facilitate the creation and implementation of land management/stewardship plans through partnerships with the Parks and Recreation Department as well as other City departments, the community, and nonprofits. Additionally this proposal seeks to create disaster recovery plans aimed at increasing the resiliency of the community's tree canopy.

Please explain the impact this proposal will have on each of the City Council's strategic themes: affordability, community trust, innovation, proactive prevention, & sustainability. (Note: The equity strategic theme is addressed in a separate section below.)

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Equity: This proposal seeks to advance equitable outcomes by partnering initial projects with the Office of Sustainability's Climate Resilience proposal to pilot programming in a neighborhood in the East Austin.

Affordability: While the proposal does not directly affect cost of living in Austin it does lend itself to cost savings through leveraging of partnerships and resulting financial efficiencies.

Innovation: By proposing to partner with various organizations and departments, DSD is seeking to find creative solutions to public land management that leverage our strengths and produce favorable outcomes both for the community and for the city's General Fund budget.

Sustainability and Resiliency: Included in this proposal is the plan to create and implement urban forest climate change adaptation strategies, disaster recovery plan, foster public land management/stewardship planning and implementation, and protecting trees (tree code).

Proactive prevention: This proposal aligns with this theme by planning for the emerging challenges associated with climate change. Both through adaptive planning and through disaster recovery planning. Furthermore, the department embraces proactive and preventive maintenance through the concept of public land management/stewardship planning.

Community Trust and Relationships: This theme is supported by the nature of the public land management/stewardship planning and implementation concept. DSD has proposed to partner with nonprofits and city land managing departments to leverage community based support. This program and concept embrace civic engagement and directs energy into proactive planning and preventive maintenance activities. In addition, responding to possible non-compliant concerns from citizens strengthens community trust via response time, thoroughness, and impartiality.

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Financial Impact

Summary				
	On-going	One-Time	Revenue	FTEs
FY19	818,681	128,000	-	3
FY20	10,200	-	-	
FY21	10,455	-	-	

Expenditure Detail			
Fiscal Year	Object Code	Description	Amount
FY19	5001	Wages	221,187
FY19	5006	Temporary Staff	120,681
FY19	5190	FICA	21,345
FY19	5191	Medicare	4,992
FY19	5196	Contributions to Pension	39,814
FY19	5185	Insurance	47,826
FY19	9045	Computer (one-time)	18,000
FY19	6407	City Issued Cell Phone	600
FY19	5133	Cell Phone Stipend	2,400
FY19	9031	Vehicle (one-time)	110,000
FY19	6531	Training	6,837
FY19	7478	Uniforms	1,000
FY19	7600	Tools	1,000
FY19	7601	Safety Equipment	1,000
FY19	5860	Third Party Contract	200,000
FY19	8505	Expense Refund from GF for fee waivers	150,000
FY20	5001	Wages	10,200
FY21	5001	Wages	10,455

Revenue Detail			
Fiscal Year	Source Code	Description	Amount

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If additional funding is not approved for this proposal, would the department recommend reallocating funds from any of its existing programs or increasing department revenues in order to implement this proposal?

Yes ☐

No ☒

If you answered yes above, please provide a budget neutral option that reallocates funding from lower priority services or identifies opportunities for additional revenue. Please include a description of any anticipated service impacts or fee impacts to a typical customer.

N/A

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Equity Analysis *(this section will be evaluated by the Equity Office)*

Will this proposal serve residents from some districts more than others? If so, which districts and how?

Districts with lower tree canopy cover, such as Council Districts 2, 3, 4, 7, and 9 will likely be targeted for reforestation activities. According to our studies of data from 2010, these districts all have less than 30% tree canopy cover, which is less than the overall city average of 30.8%.
Over the past few years, there has been an effort by partner nonprofit groups to increase stewardship activities and general awareness in communities that have been historically economically disadvantaged.

Please describe the historical context of the proposal. Options to consider: How did the need for the proposal arise? Does the proposal address an existing or historical disparity in communities of color? If so, how?

The historical context for the public land management/stewardship planning is tied to the City's chronic underfunding of activities related to public land management. According to a 2016 study performed by the City of Austin, there is an estimated gap in funding to provide the recommended level of service for trees on public property of over \$33,000,000. The 2016 study can be found here:
<https://greeninfrastructure.bloomfire.com/posts/2491744-urban-forestry-levels-of-service-analysis-gap-analysis>
The plans outlined in the proposal would ultimately seek to add tree canopy cover to public property in areas of town that currently lack it – these are primarily areas of town that have historically been economically disadvantaged.

Are the performance data for the relevant strategic plan metrics listed above disaggregated by race and ethnicity? Do the data support an equitable outcome of this proposal? If so, how?

No, the proposal is equitable.

Please describe any community engagement that has been conducted for this proposal Has community engagement been conducted? Have communities of color been engaged? How do you measure the effectiveness of community engagement?

Community engagement for this proposal has not yet occurred.

Does this proposal advance equity in any of City Council's six priority outcome areas? If so, which outcomes and how does the proposal advance equity in those areas?

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Yes.

Health & Environment: Enjoying a sustainable environment and a healthy life, physically and mentally.

The related challenges addressed:

- #4 How might we achieve success on ambitious sustainability goals, preserving the quality of the environment and availability of natural resources as we adapt to a changing climate?
- #5 How might we support more connected communities, strengthening our community well-being and enabling more effective responses and recoveries tied to major events?

The related strategies addressed by this proposal advance equity in the following areas:

- #7 Improve community health, social cohesion and connections, and resilience through programs and amenities that strengthen families, foster an increased sense of community, and enhance support networks.
- #10 Integrate nature into the city by developing and implementing a green infrastructure plan, as envisioned by Imagine Austin, that creates a network of natural lands and other open spaces while dispersing environmental risks to people and property equitably across the city.
- #13 Incorporate population growth and climate projections into City planning efforts and into programs that serve residences and buildings most at risk due to a changing climate (extreme heat, drought, flood, wildfire) to enable the community to successfully respond, adapt, and thrive.

Is there potential for unintended negative outcomes because of this proposal in any of City Council's six priority outcome areas? If so, please describe the potential negative outcomes and any steps your department is taking to mitigate those outcomes.

DSD has not encountered any in our planning efforts, however we are cognizant of, and guard against the potential for unintended negative outcomes.

How many people of color will this proposal positively impact?

Climate change impacts everyone, therefore all people regardless of color are positively impacted by proactive planning and climate change mitigation.

How many people of color will this proposal burden/negatively impact?

None encountered or anticipated, however we will continue to be aware of the potential for unintended negative impacts.