



COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION

Joint Sustainability Committee

Recommendation 20191218-3C - Trees and the Land Development Code

WHEREAS, the Joint Sustainability Committee is responsible for advising on efforts to ensure progress is made in mitigating greenhouse gas emissions and improving resilience to increased severe weather that results from climate change; and

WHEREAS, trees are an important tool for carbon sequestration; and

WHEREAS, trees and other plant life reduce the urban heat island effect, thus reducing risk of illness and death from heat exhaustion, as well as reducing energy use; and

WHEREAS, the roots of trees and other plants hold soil in place, reducing erosion; and

WHEREAS, trees and other plants help reduce flood impacts by slowing and absorbing water; and

WHEREAS, trees and other plants help to improve water quality by filtering water; and

WHEREAS, trees and other plants improve air quality by filtering out particles and releasing oxygen; and

WHEREAS, trees and other plants contribute to connections with nature that improve people's health outcomes, and contribute to an environment where people feel connected to their community; and

WHEREAS, trees and other plants provide food, shelter, and nesting for diverse wildlife, including species that are under threat from climate change; and

WHEREAS, the construction of larger buildings puts more existing trees at risk; and

WHEREAS, tree removals on privately owned land were three times greater than tree plantings on privately owned land, measured by trunk inches; and


WHEREAS, the benefits of increasing urban density should be balanced with the need to maintain a livable environment for all Austinites.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED the Joint Sustainability Committee supports changes already proposed in the draft update to the Land Development Code that will increase tree preservation and new tree and green infrastructure and advises the Austin City Council to incorporate the following additional elements into the update:

1. Improve standards to ensure and verify survival of newly planted trees; and
2. Preserve the overall tree canopy in Austin by consider new categories of protected trees, such as clusters of smaller trees.

Record of the vote: Motion to approve by Commissioner Ho, second by Commissioner White.
Motion passes 8 approve, 0 opposed.

Date of approval: December 18, 2019

Attest: 
Zach Baumer, Liaison