



Land Use & Environment Committee

Downtown Tree Pruning and Urban Forest Strategic Plan

Agenda Date: 4/24/2014
Agenda Item Number: 4.A
File Number: 14-0375

Type: report **Version:** 1 **Status:** Filed

Title

Downtown Tree Pruning and Urban Forest Strategic Plan

Recommended Action

City Manager Recommendation:

Receive a briefing on the status of the downtown street tree pruning initiative and the development of an Urban Forest Strategic Plan; and receive report from a Parks and Recreation Advisory Committee Sub-Committee on improving the Urban Forestry Program.

Report

Issue: Staff will provide an update on the downtown street tree pruning initiative and the development of an Urban Forest Strategic Plan. Members of a Parks and Recreation Advisory Committee Sub-Committee on Urban Forestry will also deliver their report on improving the Urban Forestry Program.

Staff Contact:

Stacey Ray, Associate Planner, Community Planning and Development, 360.753.8046

Presenter(s):

Stacey Ray, Associate Planner, Community Planning and Development
Michelle Bentley, Assistant Planner, Urban Forestry Program, Community Planning and Development
Robert Dengel, Chair, Parks and Recreation Advisory Committee (PRAC) Sub-Committee on Urban Forestry
Thad Curtz, Member, Parks and Recreation Advisory Committee (PRAC) Sub-Committee on Urban Forestry

Background and Analysis:

Downtown Tree Pruning

In addition to directing CPD to develop a Strategic Plan for the Urban Forestry Program, as part of budget discussions City Council also approved additional funding to prune downtown street trees for enhanced safety. In March, the Parks, Arts and Recreation Department (Parks) hired an ISA-Certified arborist on a temporary, emergency basis to complete the work this spring. He is being

assisted by one other Parks employee as a ground support person.

Parks and CPD are collaborating to identify the trees downtown that need to be pruned. Once completed, the work being done will result in better downtown lighting conditions, safer pedestrian conditions, and improved overall tree health and longevity.

Urban Forest Strategic Plan

The Urban Forestry Program has experienced significant funding and staff reductions over the last four years, which have resulted in a decline in urban forestry community services and management activities. The program is currently staffed with a .5 FTE Associate Planner. An additional .25 FTE was approved to support downtown tree trimming and strategic planning.

Funding impacts to the Urban Forestry Program were also raised during 2014 budget discussions between CPD and the Council Land Use and Environment Committee (LUEC). As a result, LUEC directed CPD staff to develop options for how to structure, fund, and manage or improve the Urban Forestry Program and the City's urban forest. To accomplish this, CPD applied for and has been awarded a \$10,000 USDA Forest Service and Washington State Department of Natural Resources (WADNR) Urban and Community Forestry Program Community Forestry Assistance Grant. The grant funds will support development of an Urban Forest Strategic Plan.

Staff members from Parks, CPD, and Public Works are currently collaborating on developing a Statement of Work, which will be used to then issue a Request for Qualifications (RFQ) for a private consulting firm to develop the Strategic Plan. In addition to directing the consultant to coordinate with City staff from multiple departments, the consultant will also be asked to use the PRAC Sub-Committee, and their initial report and recommendations (Attachment A), as critical sources of input into the plan.

PRAC Sub-committee Report

In 2013, the Parks and Recreation Advisory Committee (PRAC) included in their work plan an item to discuss the Urban Forestry Program (including all departments' contributions to managing the urban forest), and make recommendations to the Council for how it could be improved, in particular the program structure, staff and department roles, new program initiatives, and ways in which to support volunteer involvement.

Once approved by the Council General Government Committee, a sub-committee was formed with PRAC member Robert Dengel serving as its Chair. Members included representatives from the Planning Commission, Utility Advisory Committee, Parks, and the local urban forestry professional community. In March 2014, the Sub-Committee completed their work, which culminated in a report for Council (see Attachment A). This report can be a valuable resource to the consultant's work on the Urban Forest Strategic Plan.

Neighborhood/Community Interests (if known):

Pruning street trees will improve the downtown, and an Urban Forest Strategic Plan would potentially impact how the City administers the Urban Forestry Program citywide.

Options:

- A) Receive and discuss information.

Financial Impact:

None; downtown tree pruning is included in Community Planning and Development's approved 2014 budget. The Urban Forest Strategic Plan is funded by a USDA Forest Service and WADNR Community Forestry Assistance Grant.