



Finance Committee

Urban Forestry and Funding Options

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Title

Urban Forestry and Funding Options

Recommended Action

Committee Recommendation:

Not referred to a committee.

City Manager Recommendation:

Receive the information on urban forestry funding options. Briefing only; No action requested.

Report

Issue:

Whether to receive a briefing on funding needs for three areas within the Urban Forestry Program.

Staff Contact:

Shelly Bentley, Urban Forest Program Manager, Community Planning and Development,
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Presenter(s):

Shelly Bentley, Urban Forest Program Manager, Community Planning and Development
Leonard Bauer, Deputy Director, Community Planning and Development
Jonathon Turlove, Associate Director, Parks, Arts and Recreation
Andy Haub, Director Water Resources, Public Works.
Kate Hartman, Water Resources Habitat Biologist, Public Works

Background and Analysis:

Urban Forest Program Funding Gaps

1. Street Tree Maintenance

The 2017 Street Tree Maintenance Manual (STMM) addressed the required maintenance of our 2500 street trees downtown and along ten major arterial streets (See attached Map of Street Trees). These are the only street trees the City takes responsibility for maintaining; all others are the responsibility of the adjacent property owner.

Current funding levels only allow maintaining street trees on average once every 15-17 years, well below the industry standard of once every 5-7 years.

The STMM identified a \$120,000 funding gap to raise our current level of maintenance to the industry standard.

Staff have identified an incremental approach to increasing funding to this level.

An industry standard level of service would provide a dedicated, permanent crew and:

- Improve crew safety and efficiency.
- Prune more frequently to keep trees clear of signs, signals, and buildings.
- Improve citizen safety and reducing complaints.

2. City of Olympia Hazard Tree Emergency Fund

The City of Olympia current Hazard Tree abatement efforts are reactive and respond to citizen requests when the condition of a tree could affect the health, and safety of persons and property including storm response. Multiple City departments use a single contractor for hazard tree removal. Costs are charged to the appropriate funding source. The Community Planning and Development (CPD) Urban Forestry Program addresses hazard trees in rights-of-way and City-owned properties except those maintained by Parks or Water Resources. In recent years, the primary funding source for this work has been the previous year's unspent funds allocated by City Council. The CPD Urban Forestry General Fund currently has \$60,000, and, thus far, \$30,000 has been spent on Hazard Tree Abatement.

Staff estimates a funding gap for Hazard Tree Abatement of \$100,000 per year. There is no dedicated funding for Hazard Trees Abatement. When urban forestry funds are made available, they are spent nearly exclusively on hazard tree abatement and other urban forestry needs are not funded.

3. Legion Way Street Tree Maintenance

The Legion Way trees historically created the greatest threat and damage to property until systematic annual maintenance was established. In 2010, the City Council approved implementation of a *Long Term Management Plan for Legion Way* to prolong the life of the trees and manage the streetscape for safety. Systematic annual assessments and either removals or pruning have continued since 2010.

The current 2018 Assessment does not require any removals but instead recommends prescriptive pruning to retain the structural stability. The majority of the trees are rated as either Moderate or Moderate-High Risk. (Rating scale range is Low, Moderate, Moderate-High, High, Extreme). The Moderate-High rated trees are likely to somewhat likely to fail with significant to severe impact consequences. Moderate rated trees have a likely impact to fail with minor consequences.

There is a funding gap of \$130,000 - \$155,000 for prescriptive pruning hazard trees along Legion Way.

Neighborhood/Community Interests (if known):

Staff convened a meeting of community stakeholders to develop the STMM. Several overarching themes emerged from the group's discussions:

- The acknowledgement that trees contribute greatly to the streetscape;
- The importance of maintenance, and particularly protecting sidewalks
- Urban forest planning is but one element of urban design along a streetscape

Options:

See attached Urban Forestry Funding Options.

Financial Impact:

See attached Map of Street Trees.

Other Potential Funding Sources

In addition to the above, staff are also researching the following options for filling urban forestry funding gaps.

- Special Assessment /district for street tree and sidewalk maintenance downtown
- Utility bill donation option
- Promotion of other donations, particularly for Legion Way trees
- Requirement of frontage improvements, including sidewalk repair and street tree maintenance, at time of sale

Attachments:

Map of Street Trees Maintained by the City
Urban Forestry Funding Options