



Staff Report

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TO: Mayor and City Council

THROUGH: Steve Powers, City Manager

FROM: Peter Fernandez, PE, Public Works Director

SUBJECT:

Community Forestry Strategic Plan.

Ward(s): All Wards

Councilor(s): All Councilors

Neighborhood(s): All Neighborhoods

ISSUE:

An update on progress toward the goals contained in the *Community Forestry Strategic Plan (2013)*.

RECOMMENDATION:

Information only.

SUMMARY AND BACKGROUND:

The *Community Forestry Strategic Plan* was adopted by City Council in August 2013. The plan focuses on non-regulatory voluntary efforts, education, partnerships, and incentives to achieve the proposed goals. Over the last four years, the City has made progress on several strategic plan goals.

Trees, in particular urban trees, provide many benefits. Studies show trees reduce air pollutants, rain runoff volumes, urban temperatures, and capital costs associated with stormwater management. Trees also increase building energy efficiency, enhance property values, provide aesthetic values, create wildlife habitats, and enhance the overall quality of life in urban environments.

A tree canopy assessment was conducted in 2010 as required by *Salem Revised Code*, (SRC) Chapter 808. This census-year canopy assessment is conducted "...for the purposes of measuring the effectiveness of this Chapter and other development-related ordinances in preserving and improving the amount of tree canopy area within the City or the Salem-Keizer Urban Growth

Boundary” (SRC Chapter 808.060(b)).

In 2010, Salem had an overall tree canopy coverage of 18.3 percent. The tree canopy is not evenly distributed, as shown on Attachment 1. The citizen’s advisory committee that helped develop the *Community Forestry Strategic Plan* assessed the current and future potential tree canopy, established a canopy target of 23 percent, and developed six broad strategic goals with 145 recommended actions. The Strategic Plan is available on the City’s website at:
<http://www.cityofsalem.net/Pages/community-forestry-strategic-plan.aspx>

FACTS AND FINDINGS:

The six goals of the Strategic Plan:

- Goal 1. Protect, increase, and enhance Salem’s tree canopy.
- Goal 2. Increase education and outreach about tree benefits, community forestry programs, tree regulations, and incentives.
- Goal 3. Develop support at policy, management, and public levels.
- Goal 4. Improve City communication, coordination, and codes related to trees.
- Goal 5. Develop and implement a Community Forestry Management Plan.
- Goal 6. Establish stable funding for Community Forestry program.

Over the four years since the adoption of the *Community Forestry Strategic Plan*, the City has completed several key actions towards these goals (Attachment 2). First is the partnership and contracts with Friends of Trees (FOT), a nonprofit organization that focuses on community engagement in tree planting events. The partnership between the City and FOT began in 2013 with the first tree planting at Hoover Elementary School and Hoover Park.

The City currently works with FOT to strategize on plantings that address low canopy neighborhoods, unshaded stream reaches, and street tree locations. With FOT, over 18,000 trees and shrubs have been planted in parks, schools, and along creeks. Attachment 3 summarizes the planting events, locations, numbers of plants, and volunteer participation data to date. In the upcoming planting season of 2017/18, the City and FOT will begin plantings along the new trail in the Minto Island Conservation Area.

Another key milestone was the revision of SRC Chapter 86 and the adoption of a new Administrative Rule for Trees on City Owned Property. The new code and rule clarify tree protection standards, provide for notification and appeals of tree removals, and establish Salem Parks and Recreation Advisory Board as the authority for hearing tree appeals.

In 2016, Salem marked its 40th consecutive year as a Tree City USA. In celebration, the City hosted a year-long series of tree-related events to raise awareness of the value of the urban forest. These

events helped meet Goals 2 and 3 of the *Community Forestry Strategic Plan*. A copy of the event calendar is included as Attachment 4.

NEXT STEPS

The City will continue working with neighborhood associations and Friends of Trees to plant more trees throughout Salem. Planting events this fiscal year include Minto-Brown Island Park and Weathers Park, street trees along McKay High School, and continued riparian enhancement at Woodmansee Park and Judson Middle School. Over the next three years, the City will meet more of the goals established by the *Community Forestry Strategic Plan*.

The next tree canopy assessment will occur in 2020. This study will provide information regarding the City's overall tree canopy, specifically whether the canopy has increased, remained constant, or decreased, and the degree to which SRC 808 is effective "in preserving and improving the amount of tree canopy area within the City."

Robert D. Chandler, PhD, PE
Assistant Public Works Director

Attachments:

1. Tree Canopy by Neighborhood map
2. Salem Community Forestry Strategic Plan Goals, Objectives, and Actions
3. Friends of Trees Summary
4. Tree City USA Calendar