



Staff Report

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TO: Mayor and City Council

THROUGH: Steve Powers, City Manager

FROM: Peter Fernandez, PE, Public Works Director

SUBJECT:

Salem 2019 Tree Reports

Ward(s): All Wards

Councilor(s): All Councilors

Neighborhood(s): All Neighborhoods

Result Area(s): Natural Environment Stewardship; Welcoming and Livable Community.

ISSUE:

Receive the 2019 Salem Urban Tree Canopy Assessment, 2019 Salem Street Trees: Sample Inventory, and 2019 Salem Tree Report.

RECOMMENDATION:

Information only.

SUMMARY:

The 2019 tree canopy assessment (Attachment 1) determined the City's tree canopy is 24 percent, a six percent increase from the previous assessment in 2009 and greater than the goal set in the *Community Forestry Strategic Plan*. The tree canopy goal has been increased to 28 percent by 2030. Tree planting efforts will continue to focus on low-canopy areas and along street rights-of-way.

A street tree inventory (Attachment 2) determined there are approximately 42,892 street trees in Salem. Most of the street trees are in good or fair condition.

The City, through the Public Works Department's urban forestry projects, a street tree planting contract with Treecology, and a Friends of Trees contract, planted 525 large trees and 5,645 small trees or shrubs. The 2019 Salem Tree Report (Attachment 3) provides details about tree plantings, tree removals, and community engagement.

FACTS AND FINDINGS:

Urban Tree Canopy Assessment Study. The 2019 Urban Tree Canopy Assessment determined that Salem's canopy was 24 percent within the City's Urban Growth Boundary (UGB), excluding Keizer. The assessment uses a combination of satellite imagery, aerial photography, and Light Detection and Ranging (LiDAR) data from 2018 to assess tree canopy coverage across the UGB.

All neighborhood association areas gained canopy, ranging from two percent in Lansing Neighborhood to eight percent in Southwest Area Neighbors. Table 10 in Attachment 1 is a full summary of canopy growth in each neighborhood.

The environmental benefits of Salem's tree canopy were calculated. Salem's trees provide \$80 million in total annual benefits, including air quality, and stormwater and carbon sequestration.

Given that the City has met its previous goal of 23 percent set in 2013, a new urban tree canopy goal has been set, using the same goal-setting methodology established in the *Community Forestry Strategic Plan (2013)*. Using the 75th percentile ranking of neighborhoods, the new canopy goal to achieve is 28 percent by 2030.

Contracted and City Tree Plantings. To increase the trees on City-owned properties, the City has contracted with Friends of Trees and Treecology. In 2019, Friends of Trees planted 172 large stock trees in parks and 5,645 small stock trees and shrubs in natural areas. These projects engaged 741 volunteers who donated 2707 hours of time. Treecology planted 208 large stock trees in street rights-of-way. Tree species diversity is being increased through these contracted services. Between the two contracts, trees were planted in eight of the 18 neighborhood associations (CANDO, NESCA, NOLA, SEMCA, SGNA, Faye Wright, Highland, and West Salem).

Urban Forestry planted 145 new trees, pruned 2,773 trees, and removed 186 trees.

Tree Inventories. Urban Forestry staff conducted the second statistical survey of street trees in Salem (Attachment 2). A randomly generated sample of four percent of street segment (320 street segments) was inventoried. Each tree was identified, assessed for general condition, size, and specific location characteristics. This inventory of 320 street segments, in addition to the 250 segments inventoried in 2018, gives an estimated total of 42,892 street trees (+/-2,661 with six percent margin of error) in Salem. Street trees provide \$4 million in annual environmental and aesthetic benefits.

Urban Forestry did a tree inventory and assessment at Pioneer Cemetery to assist in documenting the cemetery's tree assets and to help prioritize management at the site. The project inventoried and assessed 225 trees in the historic cemetery.

Tree City USA. Salem has been a member of Arbor Day Foundation's Tree City USA for 43 consecutive years. Urban Forestry spent over \$1 million in 2019 to plant, maintain, remove, and manage City trees. Salem continues to be recognized as a "Sterling City" by doing additional work toward enhancing the tree canopy, such as improving review of development plans and permit

applications that affect City trees and obtaining a new grant for floodplain forest restoration at Minto Brown Island Park.

BACKGROUND:

The tree canopy assessment is required every census year per SRC Chapter 808. The 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 August 2013, Council adopted the *Community Forestry Strategic Plan*. This plan provides specific goals and actions to protect and increase Salem's urban tree canopy. The six goals of the Strategic Plan are: Goal 1: Protect, increase, and enhance Salem's tree canopy; Goal 2: Increase education and outreach about tree benefits, community forestry program, tree regulations, and incentives; Goal 3: Develop support at political, management and public levels; Goal 4: Improve City coordination, communication, and codes related to trees; Goal 5: Develop and implement a Community Forestry Management Plan; and Goal 6: Establish a stable funding for Community Forestry Program. One of the key goals of the Strategic Plan was to set a goal of 23 percent canopy and to focus efforts on City properties and low canopy neighborhoods.

Robert Chandler, PE, PhD

Assistant Public Works Director

Attachments:

1. Urban Tree Canopy Assessment 2019.
2. Salem Street Trees: Sample Inventory 2019
3. Salem Tree Report: 2019 Summary of Tree Projects