URBAN FORESTRY MASTER PLAN

2024 PROGRESS REPORT

About the Urban Forestry Master Plan

The Columbus Urban Forestry Master Plan (UFMP) is the first Citywide, strategic plan to invest long-term in Columbus' trees. Approved by Columbus City Council in April 2021, the UFMP will guide the entire Columbus community to prioritize, preserve and grow our tree canopy. We have three tree canopy goals: 1.) Reach Citywide Tree Canopy Cover of 40 percent by 2050, 2.) Stop the Net Canopy Losses by 2030 and 3.) Invest in Equitable Canopy Across All Neighborhoods by 2030. The department will accomplish these goals through four strategies: community coordination and collaboration, best practices, dedicated resources and stronger policies. This report details the progress made to date on these four strategy areas during 2024.

Community Coordination and Collaboration

Successful Pilot Program Plants 101 Native Trees

Columbus Recreation and Parks Department collaborated with Franklin Soil and Water Conservation District to fund a pilot program called the Columbus Tree Assistance Program to plant native trees on private property in Columbus. A total of $10,000 in grant funding was awarded to Village at Willow Brook, the Charles School, Franklinton Area Neighbors and Final Third Foundation. With this funding, these organizations planted 101 larger-sized native trees! The program will continue with additional funding.

First Tree Summit Held at Columbus ArborFest

The first Columbus ArborFest was held at Whetstone Park in August, and it included the first Tree Summit, hosted by nonprofit organization Green Columbus! The UFMP calls for an annual tree summit to share progress with the community. Approximately 2,000 people attended Columbus ArborFest. Forestry staff also demonstrated climbing, equipment operation and tree planting to attendees.

Columbus Tree Coalition Holds Its First Meeting

In February 2024, the brand-new Columbus Tree Coalition met for the first time, led by Green Columbus. Thirty-three people attended this hybrid meeting (in-person and online), representing the South Side, Greater Southeast, Clintonville and Franklinton neighborhoods, as well as several other groups.

Best Practices

Tree Technical Manual Published

The Tree Technical Manual supports the updated public tree code, serving as the rules and regulations for public trees. The manual is a how-to guide for working with public trees, containing best practices to comply with Chapter 912 of City code: Trees and Shrubs. It assists City departments, construction professionals and property owners in meeting the care standards for public trees. The new tree code and manual became effective Aug. 1.

Public Tree Code Resources Now Available Online

To prepare for the new public tree code going into effect, the Forestry section led 19 training sessions over the summer with stakeholders, training 400 people across City departments, private utilities, the development community and the tree care industry. Resources online include a Public Tree Plan template, updated standard notes and details and the Forestry permit. You can also check out the new public tree inventory map to see what trees are in your neighborhood!

Dedication of Resources

Forestry Section Receives Significant Grant for Tree Plantings

The Ohio Department of Natural Resources awarded $500,000 to Columbus Recreation and Parks Department for tree plantings in disadvantaged Census tracts! The City is using grant funds to plant approximately 1,200 large-class street trees. The plantings directly support the UFMP goal of investing in equitable canopy across all neighborhoods by 2030. The Census tracts from the Climate and Economic Justice screening tool are also ranked as either high or very high priorities in the UFMP Social Equity Needs Index, meaning these tracts have low tree canopy and high need. In 2024, 1,087 of the trees were planted. The project will plant the rest of the trees in 2025.

New City Forester Announced

In May, Rosalie Hendon was promoted to City Forester, becoming the first woman to hold this position for the City! A familiar face to individuals invested in our tree canopy, Rosalie led the creation of Columbus' first Urban Forestry Master Plan and the first improvements to Columbus' public tree protections in 30 years. She joined the department in 2017. Rosalie is an International Society of Arboriculture (ISA) Certified Arborist and holds two master's degrees from The Ohio State University in both public administration and natural resources.

Franklin County and Columbus Community Tree Canopy Fact Sheets Now Available

In 2024, the department published the first county-wide assessment of our tree canopy. Check out the report. Columbus' tree canopy grew by 2.4 percent over a 10-year period, from 19.6 percent in 2011 to 22 percent in 2021. There are approximately 4.8 million trees growing within Columbus boundaries, meaning there are five trees for every Columbus resident. Fact sheets are available for the different jurisdictions in Franklin County (cities, townships and villages). There are also fact sheets for each of the Columbus communities. Curious about your neighborhood? See how the canopy changed over a 10-year period (2011-2021) and approximately how many trees grow there.

Stronger Policies

Stronger Public Tree Protections in Effect

As of Aug. 1, the updates to Columbus City Code to protect public trees are in effect. Forestry's regional arborists are regularly inspecting to ensure trees are protected during construction. The department collected $288,210 in 2024 for the Tree Fund as a result of tree mitigation. The Tree Fund receives money from damage reimbursement for public trees, as well as donations for tree plantings. The funds are used to plant trees and care for them. The department also received 53 permit applications for tree care or planting, which are inspected by arborists to determine if mitigation is required.

2024 City Forestry Numbers

- **4,921** trees planted
- **6,461** trees pruned
- **1,217** hazardous trees removed
- **2,503** stumps ground
- **819** tree emergencies handled
- **5,061** requests for tree planting or care
- **1,011** plans reviewed with public tree impacts
- **139,730** total street trees