

URBAN FORESTRY MASTER PLAN FACT SHEET



What is the Urban Forestry Master Plan?

The Urban Forestry Master Plan is a strategic and long-term investment in Columbus' tree canopy. Our tree canopy is vulnerable to threats from disease, pests, the changing climate and increased development. Columbus is expecting 1 million more residents by 2050. Efforts like the Urban Forestry Master Plan need to happen now to ensure residents' quality of life in the coming decades. This plan will engage stakeholders (both internal and external to city departments), review current operations and policies impacting trees, and recommend strategies for improvements.

What is an urban forest?

An urban forest is simply a term that refers to all the trees within a city, across all lands (both public and private).

Why is an urban forestry master plan needed?

We are growing, and urban stresses are increasing. With a population of more than 880,000 people, Columbus is the 14th largest city in the nation. Additionally, Columbus has the fastest-growing urban heat island effect of major U.S. cities, which impacts health, energy use and water quality. With the high influx of people

expected in the future, this condition will worsen without strategies to maintain and improve our tree canopy.

Trees reduce urban stressors by providing significant, tangible benefits to residents. They are nature's workhorses - cleaning our air, providing shade and intercepting stormwater, among many other services. Best of all, they have been proven to pay for themselves--urban trees provide benefits valued at up to five times greater than the costs to maintain them. The recently published Columbus Climate Action Plan suggested trees as part of the solution to making Columbus a more resilient city.

Because of this, the City of Columbus has been researching **proactive solutions to lead in the care of the community's tree canopy**. The Urban Forestry Master Plan will serve to examine this by looking at our current canopy, operations, sources of gains and losses in canopy and the role of all types of entities within the city to help make our community healthy, vibrant and resilient to our growing urban challenges.

How much tree canopy do we have currently?

The 2015 Urban Tree Canopy Assessment found that tree canopy covers only 22 percent of the land in Columbus, which is substantially less than comparable cities such as Cincinnati (38 percent) and Pittsburgh (42 percent). With the



projected growth in the coming decades, this number is not likely to rise without a long-term strategy in place.

How is the Urban Forestry Master Plan different from the Branch Out initiative?

Branch Out Columbus called attention to the importance of trees and the tree canopy in Columbus. However, as the effort progressed, data and input received from the project partners highlighted the need for activities beyond just planting trees. A broader strategic plan that includes preservation of existing canopy, education and other strategies to preserve, maintain and increase Columbus' urban forest over the next 20 years will do more to get the city on track for long-term success. The Urban Forestry Master Plan is a logical next step that will provide a more comprehensive solution.

Who can participate? What is the project timeline?

An outreach plan is currently in development. A public meeting and stakeholder interviews will be planned for spring 2020. Multiple organizations, neighborhoods, agencies, and departments will be included in this project to provide input and engage networks within Columbus.

This work began in October 2019, and Phase I will continue through 2020.

As the project progresses, updates will be posted at
Columbus.gov/UrbanForestryMasterPlan

