

CITY OF CHARLOTTESVILLE, VIRGINIA

CITY COUNCIL AGENDA



Agenda Date:	March 18, 2024
Action Required:	Appropriate \$150,000 from USDA for the Charlottesville Urban Forest Management Plan
Presenter:	Steven Gaines, Urban Forester, Kristel Riddervold, Director, Robert Mathes, Management Specialist II Landscape
Staff Contacts:	Taylor Harvey-Ryan, Grants Program Manager
Title:	Resolution to appropriate USDA Forest Service Urban and Community Forestry Inflation Reduction Grant for Charlottesville Urban Forest Management Planning - \$150,000 (1 of 2 readings)

Background

The City of Charlottesville was awarded \$150,000 from the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) for the Forest Service Urban and Community Forestry Inflation Reduction Grant to support Charlottesville Urban Forest Management Planning. This grant application was a collaborative effort between the Department of Parks and Recreation and the Office of Sustainability, with support from the Office of Community Solutions. The City of Charlottesville has delivered Urban Forest Management Programming for several decades but is currently relying on a 2009 program plan. This core objective of this project is to produce a comprehensive, adaptive management plan. These funds will specifically support the areas of Charlottesville that meet the “disadvantaged communities” criteria set by USDA.

Discussion

The City of Charlottesville recently received an award notification for \$150,000 from USDA to comprehensively review and significantly update the City’s 2009 Urban Forest Management Plan (UFMP). Since the City’s original effort to establish a formal plan, the City has evolved its approach toward increased environmental stewardship, expanded sustainability goals, and commitments to equity and inclusion. In 2023, Charlottesville adopted its first community wide Climate Action Plan and set strategic goals to achieve a 45% reduction of greenhouse gas emissions by 2030 and achieve carbon neutrality by 2050. In addition to targeting emissions reductions related to specific sources and activities, a major climate action component of the plan focuses on urban tree canopy and comprehensive natural resources stewardship. The core goal of this project proposal is to update the current urban forest management plan to integrate climate action goals, specifically targeting increased and equitable urban canopy coverage and greater stewardship capacity through volunteer training and use of spatial technology.

The overall objective is to produce a comprehensive, adaptive management plan. The plan will involve public input regarding management priorities of urban forests on both public and private properties, channeling key goals from past projects and directly linking them to an adaptive management approach and utilizing spatial data to target vulnerable regions of the City’s urban forest landscape.

The management plan components are detailed below:

- Align with the City's Comprehensive plan and recently adopted Climate Action Plan
- Establish a formal urban tree canopy goal
- Integrate outcomes from various tree-related and climate projects conducted over the past 5 years
- Develop methods to allow the public to visualize progress, including plantings, hazard tree removals, and invasive plant control/ containment
- Develop training and engagement opportunities
- Engage difficult-to-reach and previously underrepresented communities

- Address urban forest needs and opportunities across both public and private properties
- Establish the City's UFMP in a regional context
- Connect City residents, students, and business to implementation
- Ensure the updated UFMP addressed identified climate risks and vulnerabilities

The services of one or more technical consultants will be engaged through a competitive procurement process and the project is estimated to take approximately 18 to 24 months to complete.

Alignment with City Council's Vision and Strategic Plan

This project aligns with Council's Strategic Plan Framework - Strategic Outcome Area: Climate Action. This project aligns with the City's Comprehensive Plan and the Climate Action Plan.

Community Engagement

The City of Charlottesville is fortunate to have several community-based organizations who will be integral to this project and who are actively involved in projects and programs related to trees and natural resources, which include ReLeaf, Charlottesville Area Tree Stewards, Rivanna Conservation Alliance, Virginia Master Naturalists (Rivanna Chapter), and Charlottesville Tree Commission. In addition, the City plans to conduct stakeholder (including general community) engagement and communicate with/survey general public regarding urban forest benefits and priorities, in addition to opinion towards tree maintenance, establishment, planting, and preservation of trees on privately-owned property as a part of this project.

Budgetary Impact

Project has no budgetary impact to the City budget. In addition to the \$150,000 in grant funding, \$150,000 from the Climate Initiative Fund will support a comprehensive, citywide effort.

Recommendation

Staff recommends appropriating the \$150,000 from USDA for the Urban Forest Management Plan along with \$150,000 from the Climate Initiative Fund.

Alternatives

City Council may choose to not accept the grant award and then would need to rely solely on City funds to complete the update of a comprehensive, adaptive, citywide Urban Forest Management Plan.

Attachments

1. USDN Resolution