# Policy Briefing Summary
City Council

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| **Regarding:** | **Draft Urban Forest Management Plan** |
| **Staff Contact(s):** | Kristel Riddervold, Director of the Office of Sustainability, Steven Gaines, Urban Forester, Robert Mathes, Management Specialist II Landscape, Victoria Kanellopoulos, City Planner, Dan Frisbee, Water Resources Specialist |
| **Presenter:** | **Kristel Riddervold, Director of the Office of Sustainability, Steven Gaines, Urban Forester, Robert Mathes, Management Specialist II Landscape** |
| **Date of Proposed Action:** | November 16, 2026 |

**Issue**
The City of Charlottesville is working with Eocene Environmental Group to develop an updated Urban Forest Management Plan ('UFMP'). The draft plan has been completed and shared with the community for public comment. This presentation will provide Council with a briefing on the draft UFMP and allow Council to ask questions and provide feedback.

**Background / Rule**
The core goal of this project is to update the current UFMP to integrate climate action goals and equitable implementation, specifically targeting increased and equitable urban canopy coverage and greater stewardship capacity. This approach includes both public and private properties.

The City's initial UFMP was completed in 2009 and is part of the Comprehensive Plan in the Plan Appendix. In 2024, the City was awarded grant funding through the Inflation Reduction Act via the U.S. Department of Agriculture Forest Service to conduct a set of data collection activities and update the UFMP. In November of 2024, the project kicked off with consulting support from the firm Eocene Environmental Group. Although the federal grant was terminated in April 2025, the City identified internal funds to work with Eocene to modify the project scope and continue the UFMP update. Both the Urban Forest Assessment (the data component of the project) which was completed in 2025 and community engagement that occurred during spring/summer 2026, including a dedicated project page on Connect Charlottesville, informed the draft UFMP. Key findings from the Urban Forest Assessment and community engagement are included in the attached presentation.

The draft 2026 UFMP is a comprehensive update of the City's 2009 UFMP and reflects current approaches toward environmental stewardship, expanded climate and sustainability goals, and commitments to equity and inclusion. It also aims to integrate a range of current plans relevant to urban forest management, such as the Climate Action Plan, Comprehensive Plan and forthcoming Climate Adaptation and Resilience Plan. The updated UFMP is intended to be adopted as an amendment to the City's Comprehensive Plan, replacing the original 2009 version. Charlottesville's draft plan is complete and is currently being shared with the community for public review and comment via the Urban Forest Management Plan page on Connect Charlottesville. The comment period will close on November 30.

**Analysis**
The attached presentation provides an overview of the development of the UFMP, including history and background of the project, key takeaways from the 2025 Urban Forest Assessment and 2026

community engagement efforts, the plan vision, goals and objectives, and next steps.

The draft UFMP establishes a citywide urban forest canopy goal of 47%, with an emphasis on forest quality and equitable canopy distribution. The Plan also has neighborhood-specific canopy goals, which used existing canopy cover, heat vulnerability, socioeconomic factors, and available planting space to prioritize Plan implementation. The Plan features five goals, each with supporting objectives and actions, to be initiated over the next ten years. These Plan recommendations address prioritization of resources to reach lower canopy and high heat neighborhoods first, increasing street tree stocking, management of public land and the public urban forest, collaborating with community members and partner organizations to support stewardship of private trees, expanding outreach and education, and building and growing overall program effectiveness.

The strategies and actions in the UFMP are largely intended to be led by the City. However, since most of the city's urban forest and tree canopy are located on private property, collaborating and coordinating with community members and partner organizations will be essential for successful plan implementation.

The development of the UFMP was informed by multiple rounds of stakeholder meetings and engagement to collect input from community members, partner organizations, City staff, and subject matter experts. The Plan recommendations, including policy and regulatory opportunities, were developed based on relevant elements of the 2009UFMP, local context, the most recent Tree Commission 2025 State of the Forest report (including their set of recommendations), the Urban Forest Assessment, lessons learned from peer communities, and community member input.

**Financial Impact**
There is no budget impact associated with this report.

**Recommendation**
This is an informational report, no formal action is needed.

**Recommended Motion (if Applicable)**
N/A

**Attachments**
1. UFMP_Council Policy Brief_ Attachment A_111626
2. UFMP_Council Preso_Attachement B_11162026