



CITY OF CONCORD
New Hampshire's Main Street™
Community Development Department

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FROM: Tree Subcommittee of the Conservation Commission
DATE: July 26, 2021
SUBJECT: Updated Tree inventory and Sustainable Tree Program Grants

Recommendation

It is recommended that City Council accept this report.

Background

The Conservation Commission formed the Tree Subcommittee in December 2018 in order to assist with the implementation of the Street Tree Policy that was adopted by the City Council in 2015, the preamble of which states:

It shall be the policy of the City of Concord to promote planting, preserving, and the proper care and maintenance of street trees – especially shade trees, where appropriate – and plantings within the City limits, enhancing the attractiveness and environmental health of the City, thereby promoting the general and economic well-being of the City.

In April 2019, Council appropriated \$7,500 from the Urban Tree Trust Fund for the purpose of planting trees in the public rights-of-way. In early 2020, the Tree committee organized a tree inventory in the downtown area to identify potential locations for tree plantings. This report updates the Council on the findings of the inventory, as well as other progress the committee has made towards the goals of the Street Tree Policy.

Discussion

Tree Inventory

A team of six volunteers surveyed several neighborhoods in the downtown area utilizing base information from a survey completed in the year 2000. The survey area was bounded by Franklin Street (south side only) to Fayette Street (north side only), and Rumford Street east to N. and S. Main Street (west side of Main Street only). Volunteers used the information from 2000 to confirm whether a tree still existed in that location, and identify if any new trees were present.

There were some discrepancies identified in the base data; however, volunteers identified an approximate loss of 30% of the tree canopy. Please note, the intent was to replicate the 2000 survey which did not include all of Main Street; therefore, all of the new plantings associated with the Main Street improvements were not accounted for.

Tree Plantings

One of the key challenges with addressing the declining tree canopy, which was made clear by the inventory, is identifying locations to plant new trees. Right-of-way plantings pose challenges such as required permission from private property owners, conflicts with utilities, and lack of sufficient space and quality soils.

The Committee met with General Services this Spring to identify locations for successful tree plantings on City-owned properties. A total of 7 trees were planted along the frontage at Blossom Hill Cemetery utilizing the \$2500 budgeted under the Conservation Commission tree planting budget from FY21. The Committee will continue to work with General Services to identify additional locations.

Sustainable Tree Program (STP) Promotion

A key focus for the committee is promoting the STP. Given that program is oriented to those individuals who already have signaled that they desire a tree on their property, there is a much greater chance those trees will be cared for. The committee is proposing to utilize the appropriated funds to augment the STP for those that cannot afford the cost of a tree (which can cost up to \$300-\$350). This new cost sharing program will roll out in Spring 2022, and residents may begin submitting applications now.

In order to raise the profile of the STP, the committee has purchased lawn signs. For people who have committed to the program, a sign that reads, "Future home of a Tree," will be placed in the location of the upcoming planting. Upon planting the tree, that sign will be replaced with one that reads, "Another Tree Making Concord Green". These are temporary lawn signs, all of which will be removed prior to the winter and reused the following year for new locations (if still in good condition).

Interacting with schools

The Committee has also identified the School District as an important partner to promote more plantings of trees. School properties often have ample room for tree plantings. The Committee recently met with Matt Cashman to discuss this partnership and how the Committee can assist with identifying funds. The Committee and District will be looking at locations at the Dewey School and Christa McAuliffe School for plantings this fall, potentially utilizing donations from local organizations.