

AGENDA ITEM SUMMARY

City Council



STAFF

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SUBJECT

Second Reading of Ordinance No. 017, 2025, Adopting Rooted in Community, Fort Collins' Urban Forest Strategic Plan as a Component of City Plan.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This Ordinance, adopted on First Reading on February 4, 2025, by a vote of 6-1 (Nay: Ohlson) adopts Rooted in Community, Fort Collins' first Urban Forest Strategic Plan.

The Second Reading of this item was delayed to March 4, 2025, to allow the Planning and Zoning Commission to provide a recommendation during their meeting on February 20, 2025.

The adopted plan will align and guide future growth strategies for sustaining and growing a healthy and resilient urban forest for the people of Fort Collins and benefit the greater community as a whole.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends adoption of the Ordinance on Second Reading.

FIRST READING BACKGROUND / DISCUSSION

Rooted in Community, the Fort Collins Urban Forest Strategic Plan provides seven recommended growth strategies to support and maximize the community benefits that arise from fostering a healthy, urban tree canopy. The plan outlines the current state of the urban forest, emphasizes why trees are an important component of our community's infrastructure, and identifies key opportunities to continue improving the urban tree canopy for generations to come.

Summary of Findings:

- Overall, canopy has grown in a positive direction over the last 10 years.
- Commercial type corridors are the areas of the community that have lost canopy during this period of time.
- Eighty-eight percent (88%) of the urban canopy is on private property and the remaining twelve (12%) is on public property.

- City Forestry provides a high level of service to the community.
- Sixty percent (60%) of the public tree inventory are less than 8-inches in diameter and will require additional resources to manage as trees continue to mature and thrive into the future.
- An urban tree canopy (UTC) analysis was completed to intersect canopy disparities, prioritizing future planting efforts around the following variables:
 - Social variables (i.e. income, population density, BIPOC, renters)
 - Health variables (i.e. asthma, heart disease, mental health)
 - Environmental variables (i.e. urban heat and stormwater)
 - Canopy cover associated with bus stops and bike lanes

Future Growth Strategies

The following strategies are listed in more detail with supporting initiatives (Foundational and Transformational Initiatives) in the final plan. The supporting initiatives serve as a menu of options that were identified as opportunities through our community and focus group engagement. These options create pathways for the community and the Forestry Division to focus on and refine over the next twenty years as the urban forest and community evolves, as Council Priorities change, and as other technologies or advancements become available.

The proposed **Growth Strategies**, starting on page 60, are as follows:

1. Strategically invest in growing tree canopy where it will promote resilience and quality of life in Fort Collins. (p.62)
2. Complete the shift to proactive management of Fort Collin’s public trees. (p.64)
3. Strengthen city policies to protect trees. (p.66)
4. Collect data to track changes to tree canopy over time and to inform Forestry activities. (p. 68)
5. Sustainably resource the Forestry Division to keep pace with growth of the urban forest. (p. 70)
6. Deepen engagement with the community about tree stewardship. (p.72)
7. Expand the network of Forestry Division partners. (p. 74)

For a quick view of **Implementation and Metrics** of the seven Growth Strategies, see page 78.

Addressing March 2024 Council Work Session themes

Staff heard various feedback and suggestions from Council which are summarized below:

- **Council:** Provide more emphasis on the broad benefits of the urban forest in Fort Collins, including and especially bird and wildlife habitat.
 - **Staff Response:** The plan addresses the broader benefits of trees throughout the plan but more specifically is identified in Section 2: *Trees Enhance Neighborhood & Community Vitality* (p. 36). An additional section was added: “Trees and Environmental Health” to provide more emphasis on trees providing food and habitat for wildlife (p. 39).
- **Council:** Provide more connection of the urban forest to the seven City Strategic Outcomes Areas, i.e. How does the urban forest support Economic Health?
 - **Staff Response:** The plan provides connection and alignment with the 2024 Citywide Strategic Plan and 2019 City Plan. Each future growth strategy (p. 60) lists each Outcome Area and how

the plan supports it. Additionally, a section at the beginning of the plan highlights how trees support each of the 7 outcome areas (p. 18). In addition, edits to language for Growth Strategy 3 aim to acknowledge how plans, strategies, and policies must work in harmony to achieve desired outcomes.

- **Council:** Clarify how trees fit in as we move toward a more water-wise landscape and how trees can support multiple objectives in a changing climate.
 - **Staff Response:** The plan offers a section on water conservation, drought and climate adaptation (p. 30-33) and includes initiatives to adapt to a changing climate; and to support and align with the Water Efficiency Plan (WEP).
- **Council:** Clarify and educate responsibilities for private trees between neighbors as well as other education and outreach opportunities to help support both community members and tree canopy.
 - **Staff Response:** Several plan initiatives support these efforts listed in both Growth Strategy 3 (p. 66-67) and Growth Strategy 6 (p. 72-73).

Addressing December 2024 Council Work Session themes

General feedback and support for the plan was provided by Council. Changes to the Land Use Code and other tree policies will be brought to Council as separate work streams. Tree policies within the Land Use Code are currently planned for discussion and consideration before the end of this Council term.

Other feedback included:

- Adjustments requested to Transformational Initiative in Growth Strategy 3 (p. 66):
 - Draft plan stated, “Develop additional policy for newly acquired homeownership who make changes to their landscapes. Educate and engage with the public about policy scenarios to gauge public support.”
 - Final plan was adjusted to, “Create educational support, incentives and potential policy improvements to support homeowners and other private property owners achieve long-term success in preserving and planting trees.”

Addressing Land Use Code (LUC) and Tree Policies:

An interdisciplinary team from Planning, City Manager’s Office and Forestry will work with a consultant to analyze the impact of proposed tree policies on future development in Fort Collins related to potential changes in the Land Use Code. A separate Council Work Session will be scheduled in 2025 to discuss findings and identify next steps.

Growth Strategy 3: Strengthen City Policies to Protect Trees (p. 66) takes into consideration and operationalizes input garnered from community engagement events, focus groups, council feedback, review of the existing City ordinance, and best practice tree protection policies from peer communities. This strategy seeks to add nuance to potential future policy within this Growth Strategy. The edits made above after the December 10, 2024 work session and proposed future work strive to balance Council priorities regarding 15-Minute Cities and articulate potential trade-offs in policy decisions.

Next Steps

- Finalize Spanish translation of the Strategic Plan and Appendix
- Prepare Final Strategic Plan and Appendix for accessibility online

CITY FINANCIAL IMPACTS

None at this time for adoption. However, implementation of the Urban Forest Strategic Plan's Future Growth Strategies will require additional resources over time.

BOARD / COMMISSION / COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION

Staff visited the following Boards. Meeting minutes and recommendations are attached.

- Land Conservation and Stewardship Board – May 8, 2024
- Natural Resource Advisory Board – May 15, 2024
- Air Quality Advisory Board – May 20, 2024
- Parks and Recreation Advisory Board – May 22, 2024
- Transportation Board – June 12, 2024

PUBLIC OUTREACH

The Urban Forest Strategic Plan conducted numerous community-wide and focus group activities. The information gleaned from these engagement opportunities informed the development of the draft plan. The following list comprises the communication tools, channels, and events the project team employed to garner public input:

'Our City' webpage:

- Including preview of the first plan draft

Social media:

- Ongoing posts and interactions regarding plan status and opportunities for engagement

In-person Public Meetings:

- October 2023 (2 meetings) and March 2024 (1 meeting)
 - North & south Fort Collins meeting locations
 - 160 Participants
 - Spanish translation for all materials and Spanish interpretation provided at all meetings

Community Survey:

- September - December 2023
- 971 respondents
- 657 write-in comments
- In partnership with Our Climate Future Community Consultants and Urban Forest Ambassador volunteers

Diverse Focus Groups:

- 9 focus group meetings were held between October - December 2023
- 49 representatives from local organizations, institutions, businesses, developers, affordable housing representatives, landscape and tree contractors, and government entities

Boards and Commissions and Climate Equity Committee:

- Land Conservation and Stewardship Board – May 8, 2024
- Natural Resource Advisory Board – May 15, 2024
- Air Quality Advisory Board – May 20, 2024
- Parks and Recreation Advisory Board – May 22, 2024
- Transportation Board – June 12, 2024

Public Preview of 90% draft plan:

- 54 document downloads
- 210 page visits
- 74 newsfeed visits (format compliant per PDF Accessibility Law HB21-110)
- Sent to 124 emails with a 75% open rate and 22 clicks

ATTACHMENTS

First Reading attachments not included.

1. Ordinance for Consideration
2. Exhibit A to Ordinance: Rooted in Community, Urban Forest Strategic Plan, Final Draft
3. Exhibit B to Ordinance: Urban Forest Strategic Plan Appendix
4. Summary memo of Planning and Zoning Commission Meeting, February 20th, 2025.