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# MEMORANDUM

Date: November 13, 2023

To: Tree Board

From: Alyssa Jones Wood, Sustainability Coordinator



## Proposed Non-Regulatory Incentives and Programs

### Recommended Action

Discussion item for the Tree Board then a recommendation for inclusion in the 2025/2026 Budget Request.

### Fiscal Impact

The recommended programs below would cost \$58,455 per year and additional staff time. A grant from the U.S. Forest Service recently awarded to the City of Tumwater can pay for half of these costs, or \$29,227.50 per year. Grant funding for any of the recommended programs below is contingent upon matching funds being allocated by the City Council for the 2025/2026 and 2027/2028 budgets.

### Background

The Urban Forestry Management Plan (UFMP) was adopted by the Tumwater City Council on March 2, 2021, by Ordinance No. 2020-004. The UFMP includes a myriad of goals, objectives, and actions intended to guide the City's management of the Urban Forest. This memo makes recommendations related to two actions within the UFMP:

- Objective 1.1, Action D: Explore non-regulatory programs and incentives to engage the community, plant more trees, and reforest property owned by the City.
- Objective 2.1, Action D: Explore non-regulatory programs and incentives to engage the community and allow for the retention, planting, and replanting of more trees.

On March 13, 2023, City staff brought a memorandum on tree planting and retention incentives to the Tree Board outlining various examples of non-regulatory incentives and programs. The Tree Board requested that staff bring back their recommendations for programs based on the examples provided. This memorandum focuses on those recommended programs.

In May 2023, City staff submitted a grant proposal to the U.S. Forest Service for their Inflation Reduction Act Urban and Community Forest grant opportunity. This proposal included funding for the proposed

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programs within this memorandum. The U.S. Forest Service notified the City that this grant was awarded on September 14, 2023. The City is awaiting a grant agreement from the U.S. Forest Service's pass-through partner, the River Network. Any work on the proposed programs would occur after a grant agreement is executed and after the City Council provides approval of the needed matching funds.

## Recommendations

### Public Property

The City of Tumwater has planted and maintains trees in right-of-way along multiple corridors and roadways in the City. In addition, new development is required to install street trees in accordance with the Tumwater Municipal Code. For those street trees planted by developments, the adjacent property owner or HOA is responsible for the maintenance of those trees. Together, there are more than 3,000 street trees in Tumwater. City staff currently does not have the capacity to maintain/trim more street trees than we currently maintain.

Throughout the 2023 Street Tree Code community engagement process, staff heard repeated concerns regarding the financial burden of street tree maintenance on adjacent property owners, especially if those property owners had limited disposable income. Keeping street trees properly maintained is key to ensuring safe transportation for all on sidewalks and roads.

Staff recommends that the City develop a subsidized street tree trimming program to assist low- and moderate-income Tumwater residents struggling to adequately maintain existing street trees. Income thresholds for this program and other LMI qualifying programs included in this memo will be developed at a later date after stakeholder outreach. To do this, the City would solicit and hire an outside contract ISA Certified Arborist to perform maintenance and trimming on properties selected for the program. Staff estimates that this could cost \$32,000 per year (160 hours per year). The US Forest Service grant could cover 50 percent or \$16,000 of this program each year for four years of the grant.

### Private Property

Staff recommends two programs to address private properties: one for retaining existing trees and one for planting more trees.

### Planting More Trees

Staff recommends the City and Tree Board continue the annual Arbor Day Tree Giveaway and add one more annual giveaway that is data-driven. Staff recommends that this additional giveaway prioritize and target participation from private property owners/renters of the City in census block groups with a Tree Equity Score of 84 or less, census tracts Environmental Health Disparity score of 8 or higher, or

areas identified in the City of Tumwater Tree Inventory as priority planting areas. Staff suggests that 60 percent of whatever funding is allocated for this program be retained for addresses that fall into the categories above. To effectively reach those residents and property owners in the target areas, the City would carry out a targeted annual mailing and/or door hanger outreach campaign to encourage participation. The property owner participating in this program would be responsible for the trees once they leave the in-person planting workshop.

To participate residents would need to:

1. Apply to the program;
2. Attend a pre-recorded tree care webinar or the annual in-person planting and care workshop;
3. Be responsible for bringing the trees, watering bags, compost, and mulch home from the in-person planting and care workshop<sup>1</sup>; and
4. Sign a Tree Care Pledge.

On any given year, staff would review applications to ensure that 60 percent of the trees would be distributed to the target areas.

Staff recommends that the giveaway include trees (species selected by the Tree Board), watering bags, compost, and mulch. These trees would be intended to be planted on private residential property within City limits, and not in right-of-way. Staff recommends that renters of single-family homes, ADUs, and multifamily housing with 4 units or less could participate with written permission from property owners.

Staff recommends that this program be established and provide up to 100 trees per year. Staff estimates that this would cost \$26,455 per year, inclusive of the trees, watering bags, compost, mulch, and outreach. The US Forest Service grant could cover 50 percent or \$13,227 of this program each year for four years of the grant.

## Retaining Existing Trees

Recent community engagement in Tumwater has suggested to staff that homeowners often remove trees because they fear the potential financial impacts of what a tree or limbs falling could create. Oftentimes, this fear can be alleviated by a Tree Health Assessment done by an ISA Certified Arborist, but that comes with its own financial burden.

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<sup>1</sup> If participants are physically unable to transport and/or plant the tree, assistance can be provided but is limited.

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The U.S. Forest Service grant award will provide the City with 50 percent of the funding needed to hire a full-time Urban Forester. Staff recommends that if the matching funds are approved by the City Council in the 2025/2026 budget, that part of the Urban Forester’s job duties include providing a limited number of Tree Health Assessments for low- and moderate-income Tumwater property owners. The intention of these Assessments is to provide information needed for decision making which ideally leads to retaining existing, healthy trees.