



Legislation Text

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Gainesville's Urban Forest Ecological Assessment and Next Steps Presentation and Discussion (B)

This is a request for General Policy Committee to hear the update they requested regarding Gainesville's Urban Forest Management Plan.

The University of Florida/IFAS completed an Urban Forest Ecological Assessment for the City of Gainesville in March 2017. This ecological assessment provides a detailed look into some of the economic and ecological values of the City of Gainesville's urban forest. The outcomes from the study serve as the basis for enhancing the understanding of the urban forest's values, improving urban forest policies, urban forest planning and management, and providing empirical data for the inclusion of trees within environmental regulations.

The City wishes to create an Urban Forest Management Plan based on the data from the ecological assessment and years of pre-existing research and data undertaken by the University of Florida. The Urban Forest Management Plan will be developed with a 20 year planning horizon to meet the challenge of programmatic continuity by planning on a long time framework. It will also provide guidance for intermediate five year city-wide work planning. In turn, it will offer direct input into short-term annual departmental operational plans and decision-making. The key objectives and performance indicators will be tied to a five year cycle of Urban Forest Ecological Assessment. At the December 8, 2016 General Policy Committee meeting, the committee voted to fund the Urban Forest Management Plan utilizing Wild Spaces Public Places funding.

On October 12, 2017, the General Policy Committee heard a presentation by University of Florida researchers regarding the Urban Forest Ecological Assessment and next steps, the City of Gainesville's Urban Forest Management Plan. The General Policy Committee approved staff to work on contracting for the Urban Forest Management Plan.

In an effort to strengthen the City's tree programs, Management has decided to merge City tree professionals into one team within the Public Works Department. The new team will be called the "Urban Forestry Program". This will establish a united team dedicated to the protection of our urban canopy. A new City Arborist, who is being introduced, was hired and began work on March 12, 2018 at the Public Works Center.

The Wild Spaces Public Places sales tax was approved by voters for eight years and is expected to generate \$46,551,152 in revenue to the City. The Urban Forest Management Plan is estimated to cost \$56,000.

The General Policy Committee: hear the presentation regarding Gainesville's Urban Forest Management Plan.