



Request for City Council Committee Action from the Department of

Date: 5/2/2011

To: Councilmember Elizabeth Glidden, Chair
Regulatory, Energy & Environment Committee

Referral to:

Subject: Develop recommendations for policy and use of data from Tree Canopy Mapping Project

Recommendation:

1. That the City Council direct Sustainability staff in the City Coordinator's office to work in conjunction with the Tree Advisory Committee, Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board, Public Works and other stakeholders to develop recommendations for policy and program changes based on the information in the Tree Canopy Mapping Project. These recommendations will be made with the overall goal of increasing tree canopy coverage throughout the City. Staff will return to the Regulatory, Energy & Environment committee with these recommendations by 8/8/2011.
2. That the City Council direct Sustainability staff to seek a recommendation from the Tree Advisory Commission and Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board on an updated tree canopy target given new information presented in the Tree Canopy Mapping Project. This updated target may be presented along with other Sustainability targets in the Fall of 2011.

Previous Directives:

Receipt of the Tree Canopy Mapping Project report by the Regulatory, Energy & Environment Committee on 4/18/2011.

Department Information

Prepared by: Brendon Slotterback, Sustainability Program Coordinator – 612-673-2349 Approved by: Presenters in Committee: Gayle Prest, Sustainability Director – 612-673-2931

Reviews

- Permanent Review Committee (PRC): Approval ___ Date _____
- Civil Rights Approval Approval ___ Date _____
- Policy Review Group (PRG): Approval ___ Date _____

Financial Impact

- No financial impact
- Action is within the Business Plan

Community Impact

- City Goals

Supporting Information

Trees are an important component of urban environments. In addition to their aesthetic value, trees have significant economic and environmental benefits, including: reducing stormwater runoff, energy conservation, improving air quality, and enhancement of community vitality, stability and property values for residential and business areas.

The University of Minnesota's Remote Sensing and Geospatial Analysis laboratory recently completed an analysis of Minneapolis' urban tree canopy. The goal of the project was to apply a standardized assessment protocol to develop an estimate of the tree canopy coverage in the city, as well as an estimate of what canopy could potentially be established. This work was funded by a grant from the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources Metro Greenways program. The Regulatory, Energy & Environment Committee received the report at the April 18th meeting.

The Tree Canopy Mapping Project report includes an estimate of the existing tree canopy coverage in the city, mapped by parcel and by neighborhood. The City was covered by existing tree canopies of 31.5 percent in 2009. Previous estimates of the City's canopy coverage were 26 percent. The City's existing target for tree canopy coverage is 30 percent by 2030.

The report also includes an estimate of the potential canopy cover using an analysis of the existing land use. Potential planting locations include public land, space along boulevards, park land and private land. Areas unsuitable for planting, such as streets and buildings were excluded from this estimate. Some important conclusions of this potential canopy coverage analysis include:

- Single and two family residences represent 76 percent of possible tree canopy coverage sites.
- Industrial land uses also represent high potential for possible tree canopy coverage, in areas with existing vegetation and in impervious land cover areas.
- Parcels with a low existing tree canopy and high possible tree canopy can be easily selected using the GIS parcel database for closer examination.

There are many entities responsible for tree canopy in the City of Minneapolis including Public Works, the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board and landowners. Each of these entities holds responsibility for trees within a specific geographic focus; however, there is not one centrally organized effort to increase tree canopy coverage.