

Portland Urban Forest Plan at Portland City Hall

Wednesday, October 15

[Sign up to speak or submit your letter](#)

You are invited... to support the [Urban Forest Plan](#) being considered by the full City Council

When: October 15, evening (time TBD)

How: [The Oct. 15 agenda](#) includes a [resolution](#) to adopt the Urban Forest Plan as well as testimony instructions.

Try to **send in your comments by noon on the 14th (or earlier)** so Councilors have a chance to read them.

Who: Anyone who lives, works, plays in Portland. Council members definitely appreciate new voices, and people with diverse backgrounds (location, age, culture, race, ability, and other identities). If this is your first time addressing the Council, we're happy to help you prepare.

Why: This is a time of transition, changing how we manage trees to create a legacy of health & wellbeing for future generations!

Background: Some Portland neighborhoods have low tree canopy cover and are less prepared for extreme heat & flooding than others. This is an historic opportunity to begin valuing trees as critical infrastructure, update policies & design standards, improve inter-bureau coordination, and shift development trends as the city grows. Today we can choose to align investments in the care of our urban forest with our values, making sure that *everyone* has access to the many health and safety benefits trees provide.

Crafting your message:

1. Address your message to "Chair Pirtle-Guiney and Councilors"
2. Testimony usually includes your name, neighborhood, and affiliation (optional).
3. This is followed by a summary statement, such as "I support the proposed draft of the urban forest plan..." and then describe why, sharing a personal story. (Believe it or not, your story has more staying power than any logical argument!)
4. If there is a way to strengthen the plan, state that, too.
5. Thank the Councilors

If you have questions about your testimony or just need some encouragement...

Please reach out to noelle@350pdx.org

Plan highlights related to right-of-way trees and heat

Historically... weather has been mild	Going forward... it's getting hotter, and drier
Street trees are nice to have	Street trees are essential public health infrastructure to cool our neighborhoods and enable active, carbon-free transportation.
Cooling services: By leaving the care of public assets to private individuals, the City has under-managed the	The Plan sets a goal to boost right-of-way canopy cover from 24% to 35% in 20 years (pg. 6)

right-of-way for cooling services. (ex: 54,000 or 62% of large planting spaces contain small-form trees that under-deliver shade where it's needed most. p.40)	
Responsibility: The City requires adjacent property owners to plant, prune, and remove public street trees. City Code 11.60.060 A.2.a.	The City will develop a plan to fund and assume responsibility for street tree maintenance and removal. Actions 2-2, 2-3. See amendment language.
Sidewalks: The City requires adjacent property owners to repair sidewalks damaged by tree roots. Consequently, many lower-income Portlanders cite fear of sidewalk damage as a reason to not plant a street tree.	The City will develop a plan to fund the repair of public sidewalks damaged by public street tree roots (Action 2-5), thereby improving active transportation options for our visually impaired neighbors and those who use wheeled mobility devices. See amendment language.
Space: Formerly red-lined neighborhoods and newer developments do not have adequate space for street trees. Some planting spaces in N, NE, SE are too narrow for trees. Plus, many parts of the city have unimproved streets where it's unclear where trees should be planted.	Now is the time to retrofit neighborhoods for climate resilience with "trees in the curb zone" (Actions 3-2, 3-4) and other means to designate, and preserve space for trees.
Preservation: Right-of-way trees are undervalued in development situations. Some bureaus have not internalized "community livability through tree preservation" as part of their mission.	Public Works bureaus will work together to preserve & expand the urban tree canopy in right-of-way and development situations through coordination, innovation and implementing best practices. Actions 1-1, 1-2
Habitat & Heat: Neighborhoods and riparian areas near industrial lands suffer disproportionately from heat and particulates generated by industry and radiant expanses of pavement.	Action 4-7 proposes increasing tree canopy in industrial and commercial areas from 12% to 20% while maintaining the intended use of these areas. This is especially important for protecting fence-line communities and the fish-bearing Columbia Slough as temperatures rise.
Canopy Targets: In the 2004 plan there was a single canopy goal for the city. This masked disparities and there was no way to raise a red flag when a neighborhood dipped below a minimum. <i>Currently just under half of Portland neighborhoods have at least 25% canopy cover</i>	The Plan establishes a goal that ALL Portland neighborhoods will have at least 25% canopy cover. It also divides the City into five land use types and establishes goals for each. See p.7 of the executive summary . See tree canopy by neighborhood on Appendices pg. 20

Talking Points

- **Please adopt the Urban Forest Plan.** Our whole community benefits when everyone has access to the services trees provide, such as keeping us cool, improving health outcomes, reducing flooding, cleaning air, providing habitat, and improving our health.

Business Talking Points

- We know from [research](#) that shoppers are willing to travel farther, stay longer, and pay more for goods and services in business districts with healthy street trees.
- But caring for street trees is quite an expense for small businesses. If the City assumes maintenance responsibility for street trees, it will really help our business community thrive.
- Many of our industrial areas abut the Columbia Slough and other rich habitat areas. It's time we begin applying Title 11, the Tree Code to industrial lands for the health of our waterways, and to reduce air, noise, and thermal pollution to adjoining neighborhoods.