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COPY: Infrastructure, Planning, and Sustainability Committee; Claire Goodwin
PRESENTER: Jim Parvey, Michael Carey, Office of Environmental Policy and Sustainability
SUBJECT: Urban Forest Management Plan - Phase 2 (final plan) Update
DATE: November 20, 2019

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PRESENTATION TYPE:
Informational Briefing

SUMMARY:

Per the request of the Infrastructure, Planning, and Sustainability (IPS) Committee, City of Tacoma staff will present the second and final phase of the Urban Forest Management Plan (UFMP). The first phase of the plan (presented at the October 16, 2019 IPS meeting) benchmarked Tacoma's urban forest to other local governments and established an urban forest baseline. Using this baseline, short- and long-term strategies were developed, with measureable targets to track outcomes over time. A request to adopt this final UFMP has been submitted for anticipated adoption on December 3, 2019.

BACKGROUND:

Across the Puget Sound, urban tree canopy is declining at a rapid rate (American Forests, 1998). When compared to other Puget Sound cities, the City of Tacoma has the lowest assessed tree canopy in the region. Recognizing the impacts of insufficient tree canopy, the City Council has adopted many policies specifically calling out the need for attention and resourcing to increase healthy tree canopy across Tacoma. A few of these policies include the 2008 Climate Action Plan, 2010 Urban Forest Policy Element (Comp Plan), and the 2016 Environmental Action Plan.

In early 2019, the City solicited the development of the Urban Forest Management Plan (UFMP), subsequently awarding the contract to urban forest and green industry planning firms Plan-It Geo, LLC, Peninsula Environmental Group, and Conservation Technix (collectively the "Urban Forestry Team"). The Urban Forestry Team started the development of the UFMP in April 2019, and intends to adopt the final UFMP through Council Resolution in December 2019.

ISSUE:

In urban communities, the pressure of development and an increase in ecological stresses such as urban heat island, storms, drought, and pests require proactive management in order to avoid significant loss of trees. Climate change and other environmental stresses pose a significant challenge to the City, and disproportionately affects vulnerable populations. A healthy and vibrant urban tree canopy increases the City's ecological resiliency, while also lowering the impacts of greenhouse gases, urban heat, air pollution, and other environmental stressors on the community.

The City has adopted policies to increase healthy tree canopy cover; however, many of the proactive management strategies necessary to preserve and manage healthy trees, consistent with other communities, have not yet been explored or implemented.



The Urban Forestry Team has developed this UFMP to address these vulnerabilities in urban forest management in Tacoma. The main tenants of this Plan are to ensure public safety, increase operational efficiencies, facilitate short- and long-term sustainable urban forest planning, validate budgets and programs, ensure equitable distribution of resources and services, and standardize methodology for asset management of the urban forest.

In order to achieve these goals, Phase 2 of the UFMP provides goals, strategies, targets, actions, and adaptive management measures for the following six core planning themes:

1. Management Policy
2. Professional Capacity and Training
3. Funding and Authority
4. Inventories and Plans
5. Risk and Disaster Planning
6. Community Engagement

Utilizing the research conducted during the Urban Forest Sustainability and Management Audit (Phase 1) for these six elements, targets and actions have been developed to enhance the City's strengths and target the City's vulnerabilities relating to urban forest management. This Plan also provides the framework for adaptive management measures as changes to the City's environment and public perception change over time.

ALTERNATIVES:

This is an informational briefing. Staff will present to the Committee the phase 2 Urban Forest management Plan, including recommended targets and actions to address vulnerabilities in sustainable urban forest management.

FISCAL IMPACT:

This is an informational briefing. There is no fiscal impact from adoption of the Plan itself. Many individual actions may require enhanced funding, but those budget requests will come through the regular biennium budget process. The Office of Environmental Policy and Sustainability, leading this project, will work with all departments to ensure actions needing additional funding are identified and included in future budget requests.

RECOMMENDATION:

This is an informational briefing. Staff requests the IPS Committee recommend Plan adoption to the City Council in December through resolution.