



RESOLUTION NO. 41682

1 BY REQUEST OF COUNCIL MEMBERS DIAZ, HINES, SADALGE, AND WALKER

2 A RESOLUTION relating to urban forestry; directing the City Manager and
3 Planning Commission to advance a phased set of actions to expand the
4 City's Urban Forestry Program and advance implementation of the
Urban Forestry Management Plan.

5 WHEREAS the City has historically lacked robust regulations regarding tree
6 planting and preservation, resulting in low citywide tree canopy cover, and

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8 WHEREAS we recognize today that a thriving urban forest is a fundamental
9 component of healthy, resilient, and livable communities, and

10 WHEREAS tree cover and urban landscaping play a major role in supporting
11 urban wildlife, reducing stormwater runoff, filtering pollution, reducing the urban
12 heat island effect, and also contribute to the aesthetic environment, providing an
13 attractive urban setting to enhance livability and foster economic development, and

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15 WHEREAS there are public gains and financial benefits related to increasing
16 tree canopy and tree preservation, including amplifying the impact of City
17 infrastructure investments, providing economic benefits to our residents by lowering
18 air conditioning and heating costs, buffering excessive noise and wind, and
19 reducing flood damage, and serving as a form of public health infrastructure that
20 can help reduce feelings of stress and depression, protect against skin cancer, and
21 foster a sense of community, and
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23 WHEREAS as of 2017, an analysis of Light Detection and Ranging ("LiDAR")
24 data showed the City's tree canopy is not distributed evenly across the City, with
25 some census blocks in low priority areas experiencing as low as three percent tree
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1 canopy cover, while having as great as 64 percent tree canopy cover in high
2 opportunity areas, and

3 WHEREAS as a result, low opportunity areas experience greater urban heat
4 island effects, as well as limited access to other social, environmental, and
5 economic benefits provided by greater tree canopy, and

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7 WHEREAS in the past several years, the City Council has begun enacting
8 new regulations to better protect and enhance our urban forest, including revising
9 landscaping and tree standards to support better environmental and community
10 health outcomes during development, updating regulations for tree removal,
11 pruning and planting in the right-of-way, and creating a heritage tree program, and

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13 WHEREAS in November 2024, the City Council also adopted an amendment
14 to the Home in Tacoma ("HIT") Zoning and Standards Package, per Amended
15 Substitute Ordinance No. 28986, directing the Infrastructure, Planning, and
16 Sustainability ("IPS") Committee to initiate a broader policy discussion regarding the
17 City's urban forest, and

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19 WHEREAS on February 12, 2025, the IPS Committee received an
20 informational briefing about the Urban Forest Management Plan ("Plan") and the
21 current programs and services the City offers for urban forest management, which
22 provided a baseline review of tree planting and maintenance programs, urban
23 forestry staffing and funding, and other relevant information to help guide
24 opportunities to adjust City regulations, financial incentives, and City responsibilities
25 to help improve the tree canopy, and
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1 WHEREAS on February 26, 2025, IPS Committee Chair Kristina Walker led a
2 discussion on a set of new policy proposals for expanding the City's Urban Forestry
3 Program ("Program") and advancing implementation of the Plan, which included
4 discussion of tree preservation standards citywide, appropriate City resources for
5 tree planting and maintenance, and regulatory and non-regulatory tools for tree
6 preservation, and after this discussion IPS members agreed to advance a resolution
7 request to the full City Council for consideration, and
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9 WHEREAS this proposed resolution would direct the City Manager and
10 Planning Commission ("Commission") to advance a phased set of actions aimed at
11 creating a thriving urban forest in the City by expanding the City's Program and
12 advancing implementation of the Plan, which has four phases, and
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14 WHEREAS the intention of Phase One is to deepen the City's understanding
15 of the public demand for expanding the City's Program and advancing
16 implementation of the Plan through Council-led public engagement, while also
17 identifying contract services to work on data collection and analysis needed to
18 advance more complicated City actions regarding land use and development
19 regulations, and
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21 WHEREAS Phase One has a tentative timeline of June 2025-December
22 2025 and should include the following directions to the City Manager:
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24 (1) Launch a series of City Council-led public engagements and updates
25 to gather community input on expanding the City's Program and advancing
26 implementation of the Plan;



1 (2) Provide options for expanding "Make a Splash" grant funding for
2 depaving and tree planting projects, with sponsors recommending starting with a
3 one-year pilot program in 2026 with a set total amount up to \$150,000 to gauge
4 community interest, as well as potential opportunities to allow corporate matching
5 funds; and
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7 (3) Use non-General Fund resources to initiate a contract with a
8 consultant to support analysis, planning, and development of code and tasks in this
9 phased approach as needed, and
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11 WHEREAS the intention of Phase Two is to prepare the City Council to
12 potentially advance a budget request that expands City tree maintenance in the
13 right-of-way for the 2027-2028 biennial budget, and has a tentative timeline of
14 January 2026-June 2026, and
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16 WHEREAS Phase Two should include the following directions to the City
17 Manager, considering the information collected in Phase One:
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19 (1) Create a fiscal impact note and legal analysis for City Council
20 consideration to create a program that offers business districts the option to pay the
21 City to provide services to maintain trees within the business district, and outlines
22 three potential service level options that range in cost, as well as costs for staff and
23 administration of the program; and
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25 (2) Create a fiscal impact note and legal analysis for City Council
26 consideration of a range of options to raise funding for expanded City management
of tree maintenance in the right-of-way, with options that could include a



1 wastewater excise tax, stormwater utility rate enhancement, shared tree crew
2 with other agency, or other recommendations. The analysis should also include
3 information about the benefits to the City and community of expanded City tree
4 maintenance in the right-of-way, as well as some suggestions based on LiDAR
5 data for optimal locations to plant new trees in the right-of-way, and
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7 WHEREAS the intention of Phase Three is to launch Commission
8 engagement on new land use and development regulations regarding tree canopy
9 management and preservation, with the Commission's engagement being required
10 by law when creating new land use and development regulations, and has a
11 tentative timeline of January 2026-December 2026, and
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13 WHEREAS Phase Three should include the following directions to the
14 Commission, taking into consideration the housing crisis and the vital need to meet
15 the City's responsibilities to the Growth Management Act, as well as broader City
16 budget constraints:
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18 (1) Study and make recommendations for ordinance options to be
19 considered by the City Council around tree canopy management and preservation
20 for development sites citywide, with the Commission including consideration of the
21 possibility of applying the established tree preservation and tree credits for
22 development sites under HIT to all additional zones beyond Urban Residential
23 (UR);
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1 (a) The Commission should also consider the appropriate amount
2 of time before a development permit is applied for and after a development project
3 is completed for when these permit regulations apply;

4 (2) Study and make recommendations for ordinance options to be
5 considered by the City Council that create a new permit structure for a Canopy Loss
6 Fee on sites without active development permit(s) in all zones;

8 (a) The permit structure could offer exemptions for a tree or trees
9 located on a site if it is a hazardous tree, nuisance tree, prohibited tree, tree
10 damaging the sidewalk, significantly damaged tree, or a tree located within a View
11 Sensitive District, as well as penalties for removing a tree without a permit. This
12 work should also consider implications around equity and access in the City.
13 Additional tree protection requirements could include tree size and zoning, as well
14 as other potential data and analysis collected in Phase One;

16 (3) Study and make recommendations for ordinance options to be
17 considered by the City Council that increase tree canopy requirements for parking
18 lots that are currently exempt (e.g. small parking lots) and also increase the tree
19 canopy requirement for all parking lots; and

21 (4) Study and make recommendations for ordinance options to be
22 considered by the City Council that determine and require increased tree canopy
23 requirements for commercial, manufacturing, and industrial uses in very low equity
24 areas, and
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1 WHEREAS the intention of Phase Four is for the City Council to consider
2 adopting potential new code developed through the Commission process and
3 advance potential budget requests for the mid-modification budget discussions for
4 implementation, and has a tentative timeline of January 2027-June 2027, and
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6 WHEREAS this consideration should carefully balance the vital need for
7 additional housing development to address our housing crisis and broader City
8 budget constraints, and Phase Four should include the following directions to the
9 City Manager:
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11 (1) Create a fiscal impact note for City Council consideration regarding
12 options for implementation of potential new land use and development regulations
13 regarding tree preservation, tree credits, and canopy loss identified in Phase Three,
14 and
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16 WHEREAS information and data gathered during Phases One through Four
17 should also be used to help inform future work on setting realistic tree canopy goals
18 and policies and be incorporated into the City's stormwater manual; Now,
19 Therefore,
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BE IT RESOLVED BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF TACOMA:

Section 1. That the foregoing recitals are hereby incorporated as the City Council’s legislative findings.

Section 2. That the City Manager and Planning Commission are hereby directed to advance a phased set of actions aimed at creating a thriving urban forest in the City by expanding the City's Urban Forestry Program and advancing implementation of the Urban Forest Management Plan.

Adopted _____

Mayor

Attest:

City Clerk

Approved as to form:

Chief Deputy City Attorney