



City of San Antonio

Agenda Memorandum

File Number:16-6296

Agenda Item Number: 19.

Agenda Date: 1/19/2017

In Control: City Council A Session

DEPARTMENT: Development Services

DEPARTMENT HEAD: Roderick Sanchez

COUNCIL DISTRICTS IMPACTED: Citywide

SUBJECT:

Interlocal Agreement with the Texas A&M Forest Service to conduct an Urban Forest Inventory and Analysis

SUMMARY:

This ordinance authorizes an Interlocal Agreement with the Texas A&M Forest Service and payment of \$150,000.00 from the FY 2017 Tree Canopy and Mitigation Fund Adopted Budget to initiate an Urban Forest Inventory and Analysis study.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

The Forest Inventory and Analysis (FIA) program, promoted by the Department of Agriculture, is a comprehensive, field based tree and forest inventory that is the nation's census for trees. Since 1930, FIA has collected, analyzed, and reported information on the status, health, and trends of America's forests. Nationally, several cities are participating in this program including Austin, Houston, Baltimore, Chicago, San Diego, and others.

Locally, the Texas A&M Forest Service (TFS) has been successfully involved in this cooperative program with the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) for decades. In Texas, TFS collects field measurements while the USFS compiles and helps with analysis. TFS foresters who perform field work for Urban FIA are trained and certified by the USFS and quality control and assurance standards are in place to ensure data quality.

Previous analysis of San Antonio's tree canopy conducted in 2002, 2003, and 2008 utilized technology that only provided aerial imagery. One of the distinct differences in Urban FIA is the methodology used by the TFS. Urban FIA is field work intensive where actual sampling and measurement of trees occurs; thereby, providing a comprehensive, strategic-level, continuous inventory system of the urban forest. This analysis and field work will produce detailed information on the tree canopy to include the variety of actual tree species, tree size and distribution, crown condition, tree damage, ownership, carbon storage, potential risk of insects/diseases, and ecosystem benefits such as tree impact on storm runoff and air pollution removal. The methodology associated with Urban FIA is able to quantify and assign values to these benefits and services that urban trees provide. After the initial inventory is complete, 10% of plots will be sampled each subsequent year. This allows for a continuous inventory that is updated annually, along with measuring change over time.

ISSUE:

Previous analyses of tree canopy utilized antiquated technology that provided aerial imagery from the ‘top down’ only. The Urban FIA will provide a transparent and continuous inventory that is updated annually, along with measuring change over time while directly connecting the public to information on the easy-to-use “My City’s Tree” application. The Neighborhoods and Livability Committee was briefed on and endorsed this item at its December 15, 2016, meeting.

ALTERNATIVES:

The City could elect to pursue other tree related studies and forego the robust reporting system under the Urban FIA and Texas A&M Forest Service’s industry expertise. Additionally, the City could work to re-establish aerial technology also at the expense of limited environmental and economic knowledge of the urban forest canopy.

FISCAL IMPACT:

This ordinance authorizes an Interlocal Agreement with Texas A&M Forest Service in the amount of \$150,000 to conduct an Urban Forest Inventory Analysts. Funding for this agreement is included in the FY 2017 Tree Canopy Preservation & Mitigation Fund Adopted Budget.

RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends approval of the Funding Agreement with the Texas A&M Forest Service in the amount of \$150,000.00.