

Date: October 1, 2024

To: **Mayor and Council.**

Name and title: Blake McIntosh, Director of Civic Operations

Subject: Tree Donation Program

Attachment(s): None

Recommendation(s):

That Council RECEIVES FOR INFORMATION the report titled “Tree Donation Program” dated October 1, 2024, from the Director of Civic Operations.

Purpose:

To present Council with information on a new proposed Tree Donation Program that would replace the existing Adopt-A-Tree process currently included in the City’s Gifts & Legacies program.

Strategic Priorities:

Community involvement in our parks and open spaces is beneficial. It creates a stronger relationship between the public and the City, fosters pride in the community, and encourages respect for the environment.

Background:

The existing Adopt-A-Tree process is managed through the City’s Gifts & Legacies program. The program is designed to provide residents with the opportunity to commemorate an occasion, celebrate an organization, or memorialize a loved one by donating to have a tree planted on City park land. Planting times vary depending on staff availability and weather conditions throughout the season. The Adopt-A-Tree program in its current capacity is not successful or overly beneficial, averaging only a couple trees per year, in random locations.

Discussion:

When the right tree is planted in the right place, thousands of dollars of benefits per tree can be added to a community. Trees make our spaces more livable and improve our quality of life in many ways, including the following:

- Controlling stormwater runoff and pollution
- Improving our air and water quality
- Sequestering carbon
- Providing habitat for wildlife
- Reducing urban heat island effects
- Increasing walkability and adding natural beauty

Studies have shown that trees decrease power bills, increase property values and even slow down traffic when compared to neighborhoods and roads without trees.

Park staff are proposing a new program that would provide residents, community groups and local businesses the opportunity to become a partner in the City of Prince George's annual "Tree Planting Greening the City" capital expenditure program. Each year Park staff plant dozens of large caliper trees in very specific locations that have been identified through an internal process to maximize the benefits associated with increasing tree canopy coverage while adding to the aesthetics of the urban forest. The new proposed program criteria will be as follows.

- The cost for a tree is \$1500.
- City staff will identify a specific planting location for each year's donated trees. Locations may change from year to year.
- Plan specifics will be advertised early in the new year to allow potential donors time to evaluate their involvement in the project or not.
- Tree species selection will be limited to those recommended by staff.
- Applications are accepted on a first-come, first-served basis.
- A Certified Horticulturalist will plant the trees during planting season.
- You will be notified when your tree is planted so you can visit it.
- The tree will become a City owned asset and be maintained as such.
- Donation information will be added to the PGMap layer for public viewing.

Financial Considerations:

The annual Tree Planting Greening the City capital expenditure program was funded for \$52,500 in 2024 and is slated for funding consideration of \$55,125 in 2025. The new proposed tree donation program could help offset these costs or allow City staff to plant even more trees annually. There would be no additional new funding required as the tree donation program would be added to existing capital work.

Summary and Conclusion:

Many benefits will be realized by combining the tree donation program and existing capital tree planting programs. Providing opportunity for the community to be involved in larger scale tree planting projects with a method for recognition will make a positive impact on the environment while fostering civic pride.

Respectfully submitted:

Blake McIntosh, Director of Civic Operations

Prepared by S. LeBrun, Manager Parks and Solid Waste

Approved:

Walter Babicz, City Manager

Meeting date: 2024-11-04