

Parks Service Enhancement - Arborists

Description:

The Arborist team is comprised of three (3) full-time arborists and manages all maintenance related activities with regards to trees that fall under the division's nearly 4,000-acre purview including parks, greenbelts, trail networks, sport fields, civic facilities and boulevards. Over 8,500 street, median and boulevard trees are also referred to the team for work, most often via service requests. This team utilizes specialized hand tools, small engine equipment, pickup and a bucket truck with towed chipper to maintain and grow our city's green canopy coverage. Given the special nature of the equipment, we have no redundancies within our fleet and local contractors are very busy with their own work.

The arborist team is falling behind due to the sheer volume of calls and often miss our completion deadlines. This limits our ability to be proactive with maintenance and education pertaining to our tree inventory and we rely on the community to report issues. The division receives approximately 3-4 service requests per day, with the arborist team completing an average of 2 service requests per day.

Arboriculture work can be very dangerous. Young trees are easily cared for as they are readily observed and worked on from the ground, but as trees mature, they become increasingly difficult to maintain given their size and need specialized equipment. A site assessment (including the tree) and a field level risk assessment are required along with traffic control and PPE. The work includes tree assessments on a concerning tree, prune jobs, tree bolting heritage trees and removal of massive cottonwood trees in a park.

Parks is requesting the hiring of two (2) FTE arborists and the purchase of one (1) bucket truck and one (1) towed chipper to have a successful arboriculture program and improve our current cultural practices through the potential implementation of a *Plant Health Care Program* and protect the many benefits of properly maintained trees.

Financial Cost of Enhancement:

The annual cost for two Arborist's is \$198,574. The capital cost for the purchase of an additional arboriculture equipped bucket truck is \$575,000 and the purchase of another commercial scale chipper is \$126,500.

Measurement of Service Level Increase:

The service level increase is meant to meet the goals of multiple plans including:

- Integrated Stormwater Management Plan
- Climate Forward Implementation Strategy
- Park Strategy 2017
- Integrated Community Sustainability Plan
- Official Community Plan
- Local Government Climate Action Plan
- Strategic Plan 2023 - 2026



Additionally, the service enhancement supports many important relationships such as the Gateway Improvement Area Society and the Prince George Downtown Business Improvement Association. This enhancement also supports council's vision to pursue tree grants.