

# Memorandum



CITY OF DALLAS

DATE February 5, 2021

TO Honorable Chair and Members of the Environment & Sustainability Council Committee

SUBJECT **Follow-up on Urban Forest Master Plan and Emerald Ash Borer Briefings**

This memorandum provides additional information requested during the February 1, 2021, ENVIS Council Committee meeting, as well as a memorandum regarding “Emerald Ash Borer Infestation” and dated February 3, 2021, from Council Members West and Gates (Attached for reference).

## 1) Reforestation Fund Information

*Please provide more information on the Fund balance and expenditure per year for the Reforestation Fund.*

At present, the Reforestation Fund balance is \$8,321,805. Over the last 4 years, the following has been expended for the purchase and delivery of trees:

Fiscal Year	Fund Expenditures
2017-2018	\$ 128,340
2018-2019	\$ 167,527
2019-2020	\$ 155,690
2020 to 12/31/20	\$ 69,790

In addition, there is a potential acquisition of approximately 82 acres of wooded land for the proposed Woody Branch Park Site Project using \$2,506,000 from the Reforestation Fund for Park Board and City Council consideration in the coming weeks.

## 2) Urban Forest Master Plan Public Review

*Please provide the opportunity for public review of this plan, including the ENVIS City Council Committee, members of the Environment & Sustainability Task Force, and the Urban Forest Advisory Committee.*

The Draft Final Urban Forest Master Plan is anticipated to be submitted by the Texas Trees Foundation for public review by February 9, 2021. Upon receipt, this plan will be provided to the ENVIS City Council Committee Members, members of the Environment & Sustainability Task Force, the Urban Forest Advisory Committee, and the internal City of Dallas Departments with tree-related operations for review. Additionally, staff will provide an electronic copy on the Dallas Climate Action website to allow public review and will provide public notification through the website email list-serve, and City social media channels. A briefing of the Urban Forest Master Plan has also been placed on the agenda for the February 25, 2021 Park Board meeting. With receipt of comments by the end of the month, we will compile and implement any revisions to this plan and next steps for implementation by early

March, to allow follow-up with the Committee as part of the April 5, 2021 ENVS Committee Meeting Agenda.

**3. Task Force Development and Implementation Plan**

*Please provide information on how to expedite development of this plan within 4-5 months and including the development of a Citywide task force to include internal and external urban forest stakeholders.*

The UFMP plan will be implemented by several Departments through an existing working committee of urban forest staff from the Dallas Water Utilities, Park and Recreation, Sustainable Development and Public Works Departments. This existing committee currently meets on a near-quarterly basis to coordinate programmatic and tree-related operations. It is anticipated that this group can be easily expanded to form the requested Citywide Tree Task force by adding representation of the external urban forest stakeholders.

The next meeting of this working committee is scheduled for Monday, February 8, 2021. The agenda for this meeting includes discussion of the Council request to form a Citywide Tree Task Force, scope for this new task force, and identifying potential external partners. Two specific near-term work elements for the Citywide Tree Task Force are: planning to effectively address Emerald Ash Borer and developing specifics for implementing the Urban Forest Master Plan. It is anticipated with identification of external partners, a meeting of the Citywide Tree Task Force as requested may be convened prior to the end of February 2021.

The Citywide Tree Task Force can be charged with presenting a preliminary schedule for EAB plan development for the ENVS Committee Meeting on April 5, 2021. Also, the Texas Trees Foundation is pulling available cost-benefit data on various EAB treatment options to support decision-making by the Citywide Tree Task Force. Existing City efforts related to Emerald Ash Borer include trapping and monitoring by Park and Recreation, planting other species of trees per Article X, and efforts by over 200 Citizen Foresters to remove overpopulations of ash trees including small caliper ash trees, to help control ash populations and to allow other native trees to mature.

**4. Select Cutting and Tree Replacement:**

*If Council decides to sell at-risk Ash timber from the Trinity Forest, it would seem that the only cost would be staff time? The City of Plano is already removing Ash trees in public areas, in preparation for the incoming EAB, despite the fact that the EAB has not yet been found in Collin County. As such, the task force should immediately begin conversations with timber companies to discuss a plan for tree removal and replacement.*

To be very clear: no option for selling at-risk Ash timber from the Great Trinity Forest, or any other area of the City has been brought forward for Council action. And, the option of select cutting and tree replacement has not been adopted at this time as the selected remedy for potential EAB infestation. The option of select cutting of timber and tree replacement is one of several options available to the City to address Emerald Ash Borer. The above Citywide Tree Task Force can evaluate all of the options available to the City to address this issue, in addition to the related cost-benefit analyses, in order to bring forward a set of

recommendations to the City Council to consider towards managing this threat to the urban canopy. There are potential environmental and hydraulic impacts from such removals in the bottomland hardwood forested areas of the Great Trinity Forest.

As another consideration, such removal may also require a potential change to Article X. The removal of protected ash trees that are not yet 'diseased' or 'injured' may not be directly addressed under the City Code Section 51A-10.140(b), defenses to prosecution: it is still a healthy protected tree at 8" diameter or greater. Under Article X as written, the ash tree is not identified as a significant threat but may have to be-reclassified through Code amendment, if they are to be removed because of its specific risk from EAB.

An inventory of the numbers and locations of potentially affected ash trees would be necessary to supporting action for any of the available EAB management options. At present, there are estimated numbers of ash trees, however, there is no recent inventory of public trees. For relative order-of-magnitude cost estimating for this type of work, the Texas Trees Foundation had previously a proposal to conduct a tree inventory within street rights-of-way, as part of Work Force development programs, with an estimated cost of about \$300,000. A tree inventory for the 397 park properties, creeks and channels, public management areas, and Great Trinity Forest would also be required. This effort is identified in the CECAP and supports implementation of both the UFMP and efforts towards addressing EAB.

**5. Carbon Credits for Trees in the Trinity Forest:**

*Staff did not answer the question regarding whether City Management has taken actual steps towards obtaining funding for carbon credits, but only mentioned that Corps of Engineers manages a portion of the Trinity Forest. There are over 1,000 acres in Blair Park plus other parks in the Trinity that are currently managed by the Parks and Recreation Department, not the Corps. It seems that all other park land could be used for carbon credits. Staff also did not discuss whether they spoke with the Corps of Engineers on this issue, only that the Corps manages a portion of the Trinity Forest. We would like to see City Management make rapid moves to leverage the current trees we still have in the Trinity Forest with Carbon Credits and apply any funding we are able to obtain towards tree remediation.*

As background, "carbon credits" refers to a way of "banking" carbon, typically in the form of trees, and allowing companies or even cities to compensate for their greenhouse gas emissions by purchasing these credits. The underlying theory is simple: If one party can't stop emitting air pollution, it can ask another to emit less so that, even as the first carries on producing greenhouse gases like CO<sub>2</sub>, the total amount of carbon in the atmosphere is reduced. In a way, this practice can monetize tree planting and preservation. There are three basic types of carbon credits: credits from reduced emissions (typically energy efficiency measures); removed emissions (carbon capture and planting forests); and avoided emissions (for example refraining from cutting down rainforests). Additionally, most carbon programs related to forests require a detailed recent inventory of saleable timber associated with the carbon program, in addition to specific location/area data and both robust documented forest operations and maintenance programs, and protection/conservation efforts.

One of the actions in the Ecosystem and Green Space sector in the CECAP is to “*Develop a City Forest Carbon Credits program to quantify and monetize sequestered carbon in urban trees.*” This type of program is anticipated to entail potential for carbon banking City-wide. To that end, over the last year, staff from several departments have reached out to several carbon credit banks that provide this service (including, but not limited to: City Forest Credits, Infinite Carbon, Cambium Carbon, and the World Economic Forum Carbon Finance Working Group). Information on these programs indicate that there are many types of carbon credit programs: many do not work with public forests, nor for forests under 10,000 acres. Some programs focus on carbon credits associated with re-forestation programs.

Staff continues conversations with the United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) concerning the specific request for consideration of the Great Trinity Forest for a carbon credit program. As indicated in the February ENVIS Council Committee Meeting, the USACE has indicated that: “*the Dallas Floodway Extension lands in the Great Trinity Forest were purchased for mitigation and the carbon sequestration benefits of those lands are required to offset the acres of land impacted from the construction of the Dallas Floodway Extension Project. If the City were to sell credits it would be considered double counting of benefits, especially since the lands were a requirement for cost sharing. Therefore, there are no carbon sequestration benefits/ credits for the City to sell that are above and beyond those required to offset the mitigation requirements.*” We have requested an estimated timeframe from the USACE of when they will know the final acreage and locations that are part of the mitigation required for the DF/DFE Project. When this schedule is known, the City will better understand available options.

## 6. Education and Public Outreach:

*Contrary to media reports, no one on staff or on Council recommended that the City clear-cut the Trinity Forest. But we do need to act quickly and decisively and cannot wait a year to put together a plan. With this being said, we need to begin our education and public outreach immediately.*

Staff will work with Communications Outreach and Marketing to develop shareable outreach materials that Council Members can share with your constituents. City staff currently provide education and public outreach through several different initiatives including but not limited to the Annual Citizen Forester Academy including EAB (2008 - Present), Annual Arborist School including EAB (2015 - Present), and related Park, OEQS, and DWU public outreach, education and social media efforts. Additionally, the Texas Forest Service, and non-profit partners such as the Texas Trees Foundation, the Urban Forest Advisory Committee, American Forest and others also provide robust public education and engagement, including Emerald Ash Borer information.

We are proud of the enormous strides we have taken towards a more sustainable environment and better quality of life for the Dallas community, including our urban tree canopy. Staff have committed to providing quarterly programmatic updates to both the Environment and Sustainability Task Force (Future Board/Commission), and to the ENVIS City Council Committee. Should you have questions or need additional information, please

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