

# URBAN FOREST MANAGEMENT PLAN



**TOTAL PUBLIC TREES**

**270,000 TREES**

(2020 ESTIMATE)



**TOTAL TREE CANOPY**

**17% CANOPY COVER**

(2019 TREE CANOPY ASSESSMENT)



**TOTAL TREE BENEFITS**

**\$ 198,479,223**

(2019 TREE CANOPY ASSESSMENT)

The urban forest in Colorado Springs is a valuable asset that provides residents and visitors with many ecological, environmental, and community benefits. This **Urban Forest Management Plan** reviewed a variety of sources— the City’s existing policies and plans, interviews with City staff, national and regional urban forest benchmarks, several sample inventories, the 2019 tree canopy assessment, and a community survey— which were ultimately incorporated into the U.S. Forest Service Urban Forest Sustainability and Management Audit. The results were then used to create four unique scenarios representing different levels of City Forestry funding. Within each scenario, a set of **Goals, Objectives, Targets,** and **Actions** were designed to help strategically direct City resources towards the mission of growing a better Colorado Springs urban forest for all, under any future budgeting scenario.

## PLANNING FOR THE URBAN FOREST

The objective of creating an urban forest management plan is to evaluate the City’s existing urban forest resource in terms of physical structure and program management (“**what do we have?**”), identify goals and objectives as to what the City would like its urban forest to look like (“**what do we want?**”), determine actions and targets to get the City to that point (“**how do we get what we want?**”), and to continually re-evaluate progress along the way (“**how are we doing?**”).

## WHAT DO WE HAVE?

Colorado Springs’ urban forest is living infrastructure that was, with a few exceptions, planted as the City developed and expanded and has continued to increase over time. Currently, urban forest canopy shades over **17 percent** of the community and includes an estimated public tree population of **~270,000 trees**. This means approximately 38,600 trees per year should have maintenance performed on them, yet in recent years, Forestry staff have been able to maintain less than 1,700 trees per year with current staffing and another 2,000 with contracted services. Additional staffing is critical in order to increase the care provided to the growing urban forest. Compared to industry recommendations, City Forestry is understaffed by 16 employees and under-budgeted by \$21.64 per tree. The table below describes the City’s current urban forestry program resources compared to industry standards.

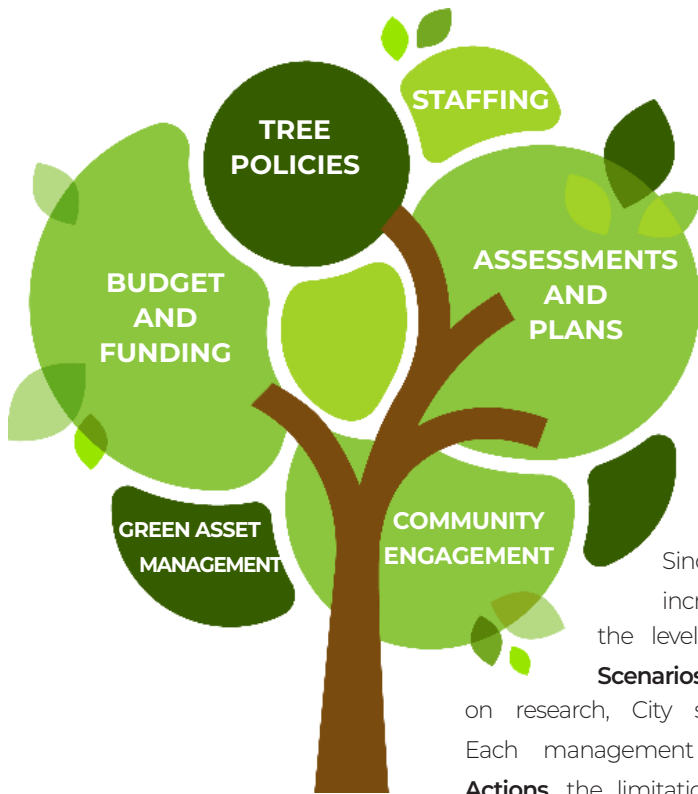


Resource	Current	Recommended
Budget per public tree*	\$5.77	\$27.41
Total Forestry budget	\$1.6M	\$7.8M
Full-time staff	11	27
Trees per full-time staff*	24,454	10,000

\*Note: These numbers are based on ~270,000 public trees estimated by the City during the 2020 Urban Forest Management Plan. Actual numbers are unknown.

## WHAT DO WE WANT?

**A Vision for Colorado Springs' Urban Forest:** *Our City's trees, forests, and other natural resources are recognized as integral to sustaining life and health for all City residents. A healthy, thriving, and sustainable urban forest is a community priority, to be thoughtfully managed and cared for by partnerships between the City and its residents to maximize public safety and benefits that include a thriving ecosystem, vibrant economy, and livable communities shared by all who live, work, and play in Colorado Springs.*



## Urban Forest Management and Sustainability Goals:

### I. TREE POLICIES

Strengthen the foundation for a sustainable urban forest.

### II. STAFFING

Improve staffing levels for a healthy urban forest.

### III. BUDGET AND FUNDING

Secure adequate funding for proactive management.

### IV. ASSESSMENTS AND PLANS

Understand trends and risks to the urban forest.

### V. GREEN ASSET MANAGEMENT

Provide efficient management of the resource.

### VI. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Develop community-wide urban forestry support.

## HOW DO WE GET WHAT WE WANT?

Since City Forestry is greatly understaffed and underfunded, incremental progress can be pursued and measured based on the levels of funding and support. For this reason, four **Management Scenarios** were developed for Colorado Springs' Forestry Division based on research, City staff meetings, community feedback, and industry standards. Each management scenario (below) includes the recommended **Targets** and **Actions**, the limitations or consequences, opportunities, level of service, and timeline.

MANAGEMENT SCENARIO A	MANAGEMENT SCENARIO B	MANAGEMENT SCENARIO C	MANAGEMENT SCENARIO D
"Baseline Conditions"	"Additional but Insufficient Funding"	"Tree Maintenance Responsibility Transfer"	"Optimal Support"
Minimum service level, reactive management	Improved service level, reactive and proactive management	High service level, proactive management	High service level, proactive management

## HOW ARE WE DOING?

A systematic audit developed by the U.S. Forest Service and adapted for Colorado Springs was used to evaluate 11 categories of urban forest sustainability and management. As the City implements the Plan, Forestry can repeat the audit to evaluate progress, assess attainment of **Targets**, and adjust **Actions** to achieve the urban forestry goals in an adaptive approach for an everchanging environment.

Example of the action framework, showing the Tree Policy **Goal** and Code Language **Objective**:



## WAYS TO SUPPORT THE URBAN FOREST MANAGEMENT PLAN

A community that is engaged with its urban forest will responsibly plant, care for, and nurture its trees, while inspiring others to do the same and supporting the City's urban forest management program. Here are some ways to get involved:

- **VISIT THE CITY FORESTRY WEBPAGE:** [www.coloradosprings.gov/forestry](http://www.coloradosprings.gov/forestry)
- **PARTICIPATE IN THE COS 150 TREE CHALLENGE:** [www.coloradosprings.gov/tree150](http://www.coloradosprings.gov/tree150)
- **PLANT A TREE IN YOUR YARD/ REQUEST TO PLANT IN R.O.W.:** [www.coloradosprings.gov/planttree](http://www.coloradosprings.gov/planttree)
- **AVOID COMMON TREE ISSUES:** [www.coloradosprings.gov/forestry/page/common-tree-issues](http://www.coloradosprings.gov/forestry/page/common-tree-issues)
- **MONITOR TREES FOR TREE PESTS AND DISEASES LIKE E.A.B.:** [www.csfs.colostate.edu](http://www.csfs.colostate.edu)

