

February 2023 public comment draft

Strategic program description

The **Equitable Tree Canopy Program** will work in Portland’s most heat-vulnerable neighborhoods to equitably plant and establish at least [15,000 – 25,000] trees on public and private property. The program will establish trees over 5-year post-planting period, track health and wellness of a meaningful sample of planted trees, build lasting relationships with community-based organizations, and offer tree care resources and communication to tree recipients. As part of this effort, the program will also support the development of a diverse well-trained workforce and contracting community for tree planting and maintenance. Parallel to this program, PCEF will establish a needs-based tree maintenance fund to help low-income property owners maintain existing mature trees that need care.

Budget allocation:

- \$40 million over 5 years

All funding through this program is expected to be distributed to project partners in collaboration with Portland Parks and Recreation (PPR). Funding will incorporate PPR staffing needs commensurate with the resources necessary to effectively implement the program. PCEF funds cannot be used to backfill PPR or other City bureau budgets.

Goals, opportunity, and metrics

The Equitable Tree Canopy program will address inequities in tree canopy cover in Portland through an approach that centers priority community needs. While overall tree canopy coverage in the city is approximately 30%, there are significant disparities in canopy coverage across neighborhoods, with a particular lack of tree canopy in parts of outer Southeast and Northeast Portland. Many of these neighborhoods also have higher percentages of low-income residents and people of color, creating inequities in access to shade, exposure to higher temperatures during heat events, and limited access to the numerous health benefits that trees provide.

This program builds on lessons from past programs, prior research and evaluation findings¹, and community input received during the development of the 2023 Climate Investment Plan. It is also informed by the decades of work and partnerships by City bureaus including Portland Parks

Public property plantings will include street trees, planted in the public right-of-way between the curb and sidewalk, and natural area plantings (e.g., Kelly Butte). However, the primary focus of this program will be on street trees. As street trees are well understood, the remainder of this program overview will reference street trees instead of public property.

Private property plantings take place on residential yards, commercial property, and industrial property. The primary focus of this program will be on residential yard trees. As yard trees are well understood, the remainder of this program overview will reference yard trees instead of private property.

¹ Growing a more equitable urban forest: Portland’s citywide tree planting strategy, December 2018, [linked here](#)
Tree Canopy Monitoring: Protocol and Monitoring from 2000-2020: [linked here](#)
Tree Canopy and Potential in Portland, Oregon February 2018: [linked here](#)

and Recreation and Bureau of Environmental Services, non-profit organizations who educate the public, coordinate events, plant trees and promote tree care, and private contractors who perform tree planting and establishment services.

The Equitable Tree Canopy program will address a number of barriers by focusing efforts on areas of the City that are most in need of tree canopy.

- Street trees: the program will strategically leverage both opt-in and opt-out delivery models. This will include community-based education, outreach, tree planting, and 5 years of establishment care (i.e., watering, mulching, pruning).
- Yard trees: the program will employ an opt-in delivery model. This will include establishment care for yard trees that are accessible to watering trucks from the street. This approach not only provides a high level of service for households who want to have a tree in front of their home, but also supports greater tree survival rates.

Tree establishment care is critical towards ensuring high tree survival rates. Under the program, each planted tree will be visited at least 100 times over 5 years for watering, mulching, pruning, and other tree-establishment related care.

Estimated lifetime GHG emissions sequestered: [range estimate TBD] metric tons CO₂e.

Separate tree planting efforts focused specifically on schools will be developed through other PCEF strategic programs.

A PCEF managed workgroup comprised of PPR staff, PCEF staff, Bureau of Environmental Services staff, Urban Forestry Commission member(s), PCEF Committee member(s), PSU faculty, implementation partners, and community stakeholders with relevant experience will be convened regularly to:

- evaluate data, recommend neighborhoods and strategies to prioritize for plantings,
- make recommendations on allocations for street and yard trees in each priority neighborhood,
- review RFPs that are released as part of the program,
- review and provide input on species distributions and outcomes across property types, and
- continually evaluate and address opportunities and challenges, including leveraging partnerships with existing/future programs to improve program implementation effectiveness.

This approach will allow for flexibility in selecting and caring for trees that meet the needs of priority communities, align with best practices for planting and establishing trees, and provide the full social and environmental benefits of tree canopy.

Metrics and reporting related to the Equitable Tree Canopy program will include:

- Number of trees planted
- Number of visits made for establishment and care, including watering visits, mulching applications, structural pruning visits, etc.

- Number of community education events and attendance
- Desired % medium vs. large form trees, including desired species diversity
- Tree survival rate, 5 years after planting
- Projected carbon sequestration
- Capacity building outcomes (e.g., established and implemented financial management policies and procedures, number of orgs with more diversified revenue streams)
- Priority population beneficiaries
- Workforce priority population beneficiaries

Direct benefits and social impact

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| <p>Financial Benefits and Beneficiaries</p> | <p>Trees are an asset that increases value for properties and neighbors nearby. Depending on location, orientation, and species, trees can also provide shade to homes in the summer and lower utility bills related to cooling.</p> <p>These benefits will be targeted to neighborhoods in Portland that have high percentage of low-income households, high percentage people of color, and high urban heat island impacts. A workgroup of community members and City staff will collaborate regularly to choose the neighborhoods most in need of this program, with the goal that all of the plantings focus on neighborhoods that have an intersection of the priorities above.</p> <p>In terms of direct beneficiaries, some properties within each priority neighborhood will receive trees and establishment, dependent on their interest and suitability for planting. Some individual low-income households throughout the City will be eligible for funds for tree maintenance for mature street trees adjacent to their property, mitigating costs concerns and delivering direct financial benefit.</p> |
| <p>Equity Accountability Mechanisms</p> | <p>Culturally-specific materials will be developed to reach PCEF priority populations, along with outreach and education about the opportunity to receive a tree.</p> <p>The neighborhoods and strategies for plantings will be determined by the workgroup.</p> <p>The program model will be focused on providing both planting and establishment over a 5-year period, for both street trees and accessible yard trees. This model provides particular benefit for people that are not able to care for a tree in their front yard themselves due to disability, lack of time, or resources.</p> |

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| Timing of benefits | The full benefits of increased tree canopy may take 10 to 40 years to be realized, as mature trees provide greater carbon sequestration, shade, and community amenities. Depending on species, tree health, and care, trees can provide those benefits for over 100 years. The community-building and economic benefits of the program are more immediate, with opportunity for greater awareness, neighborhood cohesion, and employment in the neighborhoods that are prioritized. |
| Co-benefits | Additional tree canopy in urban heat islands provides a cooling effect for the neighborhood. Air quality is improved for areas with higher tree canopy, leading to better health outcomes for people. There are also additional mental health and wellness benefits associated with trees. |

Partner roles

| Role Type | Description of the strengths, expertise, qualifications, and types of entities that are intended to serve the role |
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| Program management and administration | <p>These entities will need to have experience in contract management, supporting permitting as needed for implementation, tracking plantings and coordinating contractors.</p> <p>Government entities and non-profit organizations will be eligible.</p> |
| Education and Outreach | <p>These entities need to have experience in culturally appropriate outreach and education about the benefits of trees to PCEF priority populations, including language translation capabilities. They should have demonstrated experience hosting workshops, holding trainings, coordinating public events conducting neighborhood canvassing. Some roles can be subcontracted to smaller organizations to build capacity and fill culturally specific needs.</p> <p>Non-profit organizations will be eligible.</p> |
| Tree planting and establishment | <p>These entities need to have the equipment, staffing, tree care training protocols, and tools required to plant both street trees and yard trees. They should have demonstrated experience in transporting, planting and caring for trees, including required equipment or subcontracts related to watering, mulching and pruning trees.</p> <p>Non-profit organizations and private businesses will be eligible to serve this role.</p> |

Workforce and contractor development and equity

Funding amount (5-years): TBD based on workforce market study to be completed in April 2023

- Workforce priority population opportunities will include on-the ground roles for tree planting, establishment, watering, and pruning as well as in community outreach, education and project coordination. Contracting opportunities for private businesses and non-profit organizations include those listed in the prior section, as well as certified professional arborists who will be engaged through the need-based maintenance fund.
- The program will include a workforce development scope of work tailored to the workforce gaps of the local urban forestry sector. This may include the development of an urban forestry pre-apprenticeship program or an arboriculture apprenticeship program, focused on opportunities for professional certifications. This will be further informed by community stakeholders and PCEF's market study conducted by EcoNorthwest.
- The program will include a contractor support scope of work tailored to the contracting needs (both for priority private businesses and non-profit organizations) of the local urban forestry sector. This will include business development training to better support contractors, such as landscape technicians, access City contracts, as well as financial resources for relevant equipment acquisition. This will also be further informed by community stakeholders and PCEF's market study conducted by EcoNorthwest.

Timeline and implementation

- Once an interagency agreement is developed between PCEF and PPR this spring, program implementation will advance with initial staff hiring, tree procurement, and request for proposal development for the various program scopes.
- The program workgroup will be convened starting in spring 2023, identifying priority neighborhoods and planting strategies. The program anticipates beginning initial planting efforts in fall 2023, with a recognition that it will take one to three years to ramp up implementation due to tree supply, labor, and logistics needs.
- Development of the need-based tree maintenance fund will occur in parallel with this effort, with the goal of an active program with intake, assessment and qualification implemented by fall 2023.