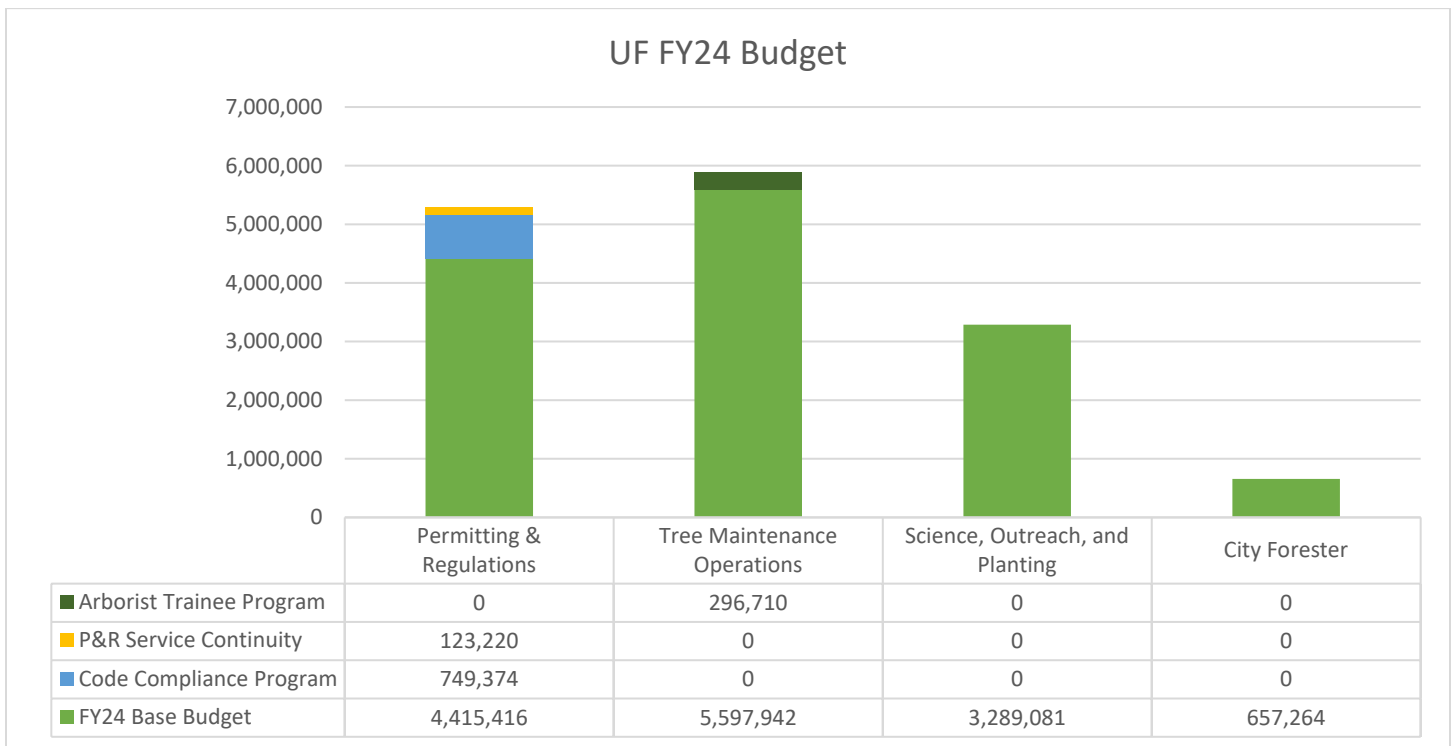




PP&R Urban Forestry FY24 Budget Requests



Code Compliance Package

Cost: \$749,374 | 6 FTE | % Budget Increase: 16.9%

Description

The City of Portland relies on a regulatory model for the maintenance, removal, and replacement of the vast majority of the urban forest. However, PP&R Urban Forestry (UF) is not adequately staffed to investigate illegal tree removal or damage, abate hazardous or nuisance trees, nor ensure new trees are planted as required by a permit.

The UF staff responsible for investigating an average of 730 new Tree Code violations each year are also the City’s only staff responsible for reviewing, processing, and inspecting Tree Code permit applications. When violations are reported, staff are diverted from constituents who are following Tree Code regulations in order to respond to alleged Tree Code violations. The result is permit case workloads 50% greater than established performance targets.

Service Impacts

This package seeks to create a dedicated Tree Code Compliance team to better serve the community in efficiently responding to alleged Tree Code violations while simultaneously processing tree permit applications and issuing permits



in a timely and efficient manner. Currently, less than a quarter of code compliance cases are addressed by Urban Forestry.

Creating a dedicated code compliance will also make significant process towards ensuring of trees required by permits every year are planted. An estimated 2,000 trees are not planted each year due to lack of compliance.

The intended result of this package is to improve overall management of the urban forest by increasing the efficiency and effectiveness of the Tree Permitting & Regulation program. Creating a dedicated Tree Code Compliance team will reduce unsustainable workload challenges, reduce permit issuance turnaround times, increase service to permit customers, and result in better tree preservation and planting outcomes.

Permitting & Regulation Service Continuity

Cost: \$123,220 | 1 FTE | % Budget Increase: 2.7%

Description

This package adds an additional staff, vehicle, and ongoing related costs to meet PP&R's PCC Title 11 Trees regulatory and permitting responsibilities. PP&R is the City's sole implementer of most Tree Code requirements. These Tree Code requirements apply to all private properties, public rights-of-way and City-owned and managed properties in Portland including PP&R's. The additional Tree Inspector position requested will improve permitting accuracy and speed, customer service, interbureau coordination and forest infrastructure management. Presently, due to the inadequate number of Tree Inspector positions, permit processing times are at least three times as long as performance targets and can regularly stretch to 12 weeks.

Tree Inspectors are responsible for applying City Tree Code regulations through plan review and on-site tree condition assessments, and tree risk and tree preservation field inspections to review, process and issue non-development and development tree permits, investigate tree code violations and enforce tree code regulations citywide.

Service Impacts

The requested staff in this package will help to address challenging workload issues which have resulted in permit processing times approximately three times longer than established performance targets and 200 unassigned code compliance cases. Progress on this front will result in better service to community members interacting with the Urban Forestry Permitting & Regulation program and more generally improve overall forest management.

Increasing Tree Inspector staffing levels also creates improved capacity and space for education, both in-person and on-site, support and advice.

The increase in staff will allow for improved in-person engagement across the city. City staff will have more capacity to spend time with permit applicants to explain, support and advise. This improved level of service, including in-person field visits, will help City staff engage with Portlanders and build trust.

The outcomes of this package will be felt citywide as increased Permitting & Regulation staff capacity will result in improved service for permit customers and forest outcomes for Portlanders.



Arborist Trainee Program

Cost: \$296,710 | 3 FTE | % Budget Increase: 5.3%

Package Description

This package proposes three new positions in the Arborist Trainee classification. This is an existing classification which was created for the purpose of creating a pathway for diverse candidates to find employment and career opportunities in the arboricultural industry.

PP&R's Arborist Trainee program will be modeled off of the existing program utilized in the Professional Repair and Maintenance work group. The program would leverage existing relationships with organizations like IRCO, Latino Network, and Urban League that have expressed strong interest in partnering with PP&R on apprenticeship programs.

Service Impacts

The intent of this package is to provide more accessible avenues to careers in tree care for diverse applicants. The arboricultural industry is overwhelmingly white and male, and this is evident across the private and public sectors. Establishing a trainee program will support individuals without prior experience in the field to develop employable skillsets and ultimately progress further in their careers.

Promote Equity in Tree Permitting Services

Cost: \$0 | 0 FTE | % Budget Increase: 0%

Package Description

In response to COVID-19, PP&R piloted a new hardship fee waiver program. The goal of the pilot was to eliminate financial barriers to tree permitting services offered by PP&R. Under this pilot, low-income applicants received a waiver for certain permit fees for single-family residence properties. The pilot program was later expanded to also include reductions and waivers of mitigation requirements and enforcement penalties for violation of Title 11.

In order to reduce the burden on applicants to demonstrate low-income qualifications, PP&R UF utilized the Portland Water Bureau's existing Bill Discount program list. Applicants currently enrolled in this PWB program were eligible for the PP&R hardship fee waiver.

This package requests \$8,000 in ongoing funds to offset the revenue lost from waived permit fees. No funding is requested to replace waived code violation fees and penalties.

Service Impacts

The goal of this package is to eliminate financial barriers to maintaining compliance with Title 11 for low-income residential property owners. While UF does not collect demographic information on applicants who utilize the fee waiver program, low-income members of the Portland community are disproportionately likely to be people of color.