



“Trees Protect Us... We Protect Trees!”

Problem:

- Columbus is already feeling the impacts of climate change through **extreme heat, flooding, and worsening air quality.**
- **Extreme Heat:** When there is more concrete and less green space, temperatures rise.
 - Columbus is the *fastest* growing urban heat island in the U.S., and the *8th most intense* (Climate Central). Urban heat islands refer to the temperature difference between a city and surrounding rural areas, which can reach up to 24°F in Columbus.
 - Heat is the #1 weather-related killer in the U.S., with temperatures over 90°F associated with dangerous ozone pollution levels that can trigger asthma attacks, heart attacks, and other serious health impacts (UFMP).
- **Flooding:** Columbus is experiencing more frequent and intense rainfall (GLISA 2016).
 - More impervious surfaces increase the risk of flash flooding, which poses a threat to public health and infrastructure (UFMP).
 - Flooding can cause substantial property damage, including mold which can aggravate respiratory illnesses like COPD and asthma (CDC).
- **Worsening air Quality:** While the findings are still being evaluated, Columbus was recently reported to have the worst air quality in the U.S. based on levels of fine particulate matter (PM 2.5, IQair).
 - PM 2.5 has been associated with pre-mature death in people with lung or heart disease, non-fatal heart attacks, aggravated asthma, and decreased lung function (US EPA).
- Each of these problems **hit the most vulnerable – often Black, Brown, and low-income communities – the hardest.**
 - Redlined neighborhoods in Columbus have more concrete and less trees, which means hotter summers and worse air quality (UFMP).
 - Black, Brown, and low-income communities are more likely to live near industry, highways, landfills, and other sources of pollution, leading to an increased risk of premature death (American Lung Association).
 - In Central Ohio, Black children are *five times* more likely to be hospitalized for asthma than their white peers (Ohio Dept. of Health).

Solution: Trees!

- Large trees are one of the most effective ways to combat climate change because they **lower temperatures, reduce flooding, and improve air quality.**
 - One large tree can: have the cooling effect of *10 room-sized air conditioners* running 20 hours a day, *absorb 500 to 4,000 gallons* of stormwater annually, and produce enough daily oxygen for a family of four! (UFMP)
 - It would take a newly planted tree 25-30 years to provide these same benefits (UFMP).
 - Tree canopy can also remove up to 60% of street level pollution and particulate matter.

- Columbus has significantly lower tree coverage than cities of similar size (22% on average compared to 37-40% in cities like Pittsburgh, Cincinnati, and Louisville) (UFMP).
 - This already low tree canopy is not evenly distributed, with some neighborhoods having as little as 9% tree coverage (UFMP).
- Cities with higher percentages of tree cover have one thing in common: legal protections for large trees on private property.
 - 70% of Columbus' existing canopy is on private property.
 - Columbus is experiencing rapid growth, and too often development means loss of tree canopy (American Forests)
- The City of Columbus approved an Urban Forestry Master Plan (UFMP) in 2021 that lays out a clear action plan to protect existing trees and increase tree canopy citywide, with a goal of no net canopy loss by 2030 and 40% tree coverage by 2050.

The Ask:

- For City Council to commit to implementing the Urban Forestry Master Plan with fidelity, which means:
 - Introducing and passing an ordinance that would protect large trees on private property;
 - Increasing canopy in priority neighborhoods as identified in the Plan;
 - Ensuring that both of these steps are funded and enforced, and;
 - Meeting with BREAD to ensure that the plan is implemented effectively and equitably.

Our Biggest Concerns regarding the Consultant's Report on the Private Tree Ordinance

Introduction: Columbus' Urban Forestry Master Plan has the goal of reaching Citywide Tree Canopy Cover of 40% by 2050. We're now at 22%. That's a huge jump. We need bold action.

1. **Applicability: We want the new private tree code to protect trees on private residential property as well as development sites.**
2. **Ordinance Location in City Code: We want the City Forester to approve or reject a proposed project based on tree protections.**
3. **As recommended, the "Tree Fund," which collects tree protection and replacement fines, must include: (1) a Homeowner Tree Care Assistance Program, to support residents in maintaining and caring for their trees; and (2) assistance to affordable housing sites to aid in preservation and planting of trees, to ensure tree coverage equity.**
4. **The process for enacting the Private Tree Code must include robust public participation, at each step along the way.**
5. **Columbus City Council MUST enact a new private tree ordinance.** Anything less will significantly jeopardize the city's goals laid out in the Urban Forestry Master Plan.