TREES AND FORESTS

DEFINITION/DESCRIPTION

Trees are essential to healthy, vibrant communities and Baltimore is blessed with an abundance of them. A leafy, green canopy acts as the city's lungs and air conditioner by cooling and cleaning our air and water. Well-maintained trees are known to improve property values, soften hard edges and even reduce incidences of crime. Trees contribute toward improving our health, strengthening our communities, our economy and improving our overall way of life—while providing habitat for wildlife, we might otherwise not see in our urban environment.

CURRENT STATUS

Baltimore's tree canopy – a measure of the proportion of the city shaded by trees - is at 27.4%, still well below our target of 40%. TreeBaltimore, a city-led public private partnership led focuses on planting and tending trees on city-owned property, putting out a call-to-action to residents by giving away free trees and educating people on their importance. Although we are investing in growing our tree canopy, our trees and forests face greater threats than ever before. The emerald ash borer, invasive vines, an increase in deer population, climate change and development pressures all negatively affect our trees.

EQUITY INDICATORS

Areas of the city with the least number of trees have higher summer temperatures associated with risk of adverse health impacts, especially for the young, elderly, and the sick. The neighborhoods most impacted by a low canopy are largely, majority communities of color and low-income. Tree planting and preservation, as well as public engagement, will continue to be targeted in the areas of the city with the least amount of trees. Citywide and neighborhood organizations, residents and students will work together to create neighborhood tree planting plans. The City will prioritize proactive pruning and other measures equitably, to ensure that trees have a positive impact on residents. With the help of research partnerships, a tree prioritization map is used to focus on those neighborhoods most in need.

STRATEGIES

1. Increase the city's tree canopy

Action 1 – Classify trees as infrastructure: require city agencies to plant and maintain trees in capital projects, plans and procedures.

Action 2 – Expand the call-to-action for residents, organizations and businesses to plant and care for trees including fruit trees. Provide educational opportunities to for residents to learn the benefits of trees in our city for both people and nature.

Action 3 - Distribute free and reduced cost trees along with education materials to private landowners.

Action 4 – Open more street tree pits and enlarge those that exist

Action 5 – Focus planting and maintenance in neighborhoods with the lowest tree canopy; create individual neighborhood-level tree plans.

2. **Assess and manage the city's tree canopy for long-term health**

   Action 1 – Conduct a complete street tree inventory and forest assessments in large parks

   Action 2 – Create and implement plans to reduce threats to trees such as deer and the emerald ash borer

   Action 3 – Increase resources available for city-led forest management and care

   Action 4 – Support resident education and non-profit and tree management and care

3. **Preserve the city's existing tree canopy**

   Action 1 – Adopt a Tree Ordinance, stricter standards for utilities and restrict the clearing and sale of publicly owned forests.

   Action 2 – Investigate the creation of a forest land banking credit program or permanent conservation easements.

   Action 3 – Restrict, and possibly prohibit, the clearing or sale of publicly-owned forests

   Action 4 – Hold utilities to strict standards for protecting the tree canopy

   Action 5 – Adopt a no-net-loss-of-canopy policy city-wide.

METRICS FOR SUCCESS

Strategy 1:	Quantitative	Zero loss of existing forests due to human action by 2025.
Strategy 2:	Quantitative	Active management of 75% of forests and trees within the city by 2030.
Strategy 3:	Quantitative	Achieve 40% tree canopy by 2030.
Strategy 4:	Quantitative	Plant # of trees annually
Strategy 5:	Quantitative	# residents who plant and maintain trees