

INTRODUCED: 11/7/2022

REFERRED TO: Committee of the Whole

SPONSOR: Councillors Barth, Adamson, Larrison, Boots, Osili, Carlino, Evans, Jones and Ray

DIGEST: supports the development of mechanisms intended to protect and generate revenue for maintenance of urban forests and trees throughout the City of Indianapolis and Marion County

SOURCE:

Initiated by: Councillor John Barth

Drafted by: Office of Sustainability/Department of Public Works

LEGAL REQUIREMENTS FOR ADOPTION:

Subject to approval or veto by Mayor

PROPOSED EFFECTIVE DATE:

Adoption and approvals

GENERAL COUNSEL APPROVAL: _____ Date: November 3, 2022

CITY-COUNTY SPECIAL RESOLUTION NO. _____, 2022

PROPOSAL FOR A SPECIAL RESOLUTION of the City-County Council to support the development of mechanisms intended to protect and generate revenue for maintenance of Urban Forests and Trees throughout the City of Indianapolis and Marion County.

WHEREAS, the City-County's sustainability and resilience plan, Thrive Indianapolis, sets a goal of planting 30,000 native trees by 2025, to increase canopy, reduce runoff, and mitigate against the urban heat island, particularly in those neighborhoods in most need; and

WHEREAS, as outlined in Thrive Indianapolis, a 2018 analysis revealed that our Urban Tree Canopy (UTC) in Marion County – which is inclusive of trees throughout the city and in our parks' urban forests—coverage was just 33%, and that the UTC in different neighborhoods ranges from 3 – 78% throughout Indianapolis; and

WHEREAS, the Department of Parks and Recreation is comprised of 214 parks equating to 11,254 acres of urban forestry. An estimated 2,728 acres in our City's parks are forested with 10 or more acres of continuous canopy. Of the forested parks, 463 acres are protected as a nature preserve; and

WHEREAS, the City of Indianapolis is a certified "Tree City USA" city for 34 consecutive years – and recipient of the Tree City USA Growth Award 14 times, demonstrating the innovative urban forestry program and projects housed within the Department of Public Works; and

WHEREAS, the DPW Land Stewardship program manages approximately 2,000 acres of the parks system to increase the benefits of ecosystem services; and

WHEREAS, the benefits of a healthy and continuous tree canopy are recognized as improved air quality, reduction in heat island effect, increased physical activity, improvement in mental health outcomes, community cohesion, and crime reduction; and

WHEREAS, it is also recognized that trees provide many benefits for protecting stormwater and our waterways. A 2016 study completed by Davey Resource Group found that the City's public street trees intercepted 536,321,425 gallons of stormwater each year; and

WHEREAS, it is the mission of relevant City departments to increase per capita spending in Parks beyond the \$43.72 of per capita spending of 2021; and

WHEREAS, the Department of Public Works funds the planting of 1,500 trees annually in the areas of the greatest need, both parkland and the right-of-way. Since 2018, DPW and key partners have planted 23,662 trees in public spaces, working towards our above-mentioned goal of planting 30,000; and

WHEREAS, the City of Indianapolis, through its Office of Sustainability, is investigating the feasibility of protecting trees through selling credits for the carbon sequestration provided by trees. Creating carbon sequestering projects in which the trees are registered as credits, verified, and sold on the voluntary carbon market is an opportunity to protect trees by generating a revenue source to be used for maintaining and promoting the health of the trees; and

WHEREAS, a carbon credit represents one metric ton of carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions that is stored in our trees and urban forests. Once a tree or acre of urban forest is registered, verified, and sold as a carbon credit, trees are protected from removal for the next 26 to 100 years while also keeping harmful greenhouse gases out of the atmosphere; and

WHEREAS, in 2022, the news outlet Axios reported the sale of over a dozen city forestry projects across the U.S. earning more than \$1 million in the first bundled sale of carbon credits, representing the largest single urban forest carbon credit purchase in history. The offsets amounted to 31,533 carbon credits, representing 3,533 metric tons of CO₂ and were sold for more than \$34/credit. The sale price is among the highest ever paid for forest carbon credits; and

WHEREAS, in the event that the City of Indianapolis decides to sell the verified carbon credits to interested buyers, all profit generated from this revenue source will be used solely for the purpose of maintaining, preserving and increasing our Urban Tree Canopy; now, therefore:

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY-COUNTY COUNCIL OF THE
CITY OF INDIANAPOLIS AND OF MARION COUNTY, INDIANA:

SECTION 1. The Indianapolis City-County Council supports the aforementioned City Agencies and Departments in their exploration of the research and development of the Forest and Tree Carbon Credit project and encourages the City to advance this initiative as quickly as is feasible.

SECTION 2. The Council recommends an update and recommendation for next steps of this project within a year from today, including timelines, proposed model, and potential outcomes, during meetings of the Environmental Sustainability Committee during the second and fourth quarter of 2023.

SECTION 3: The Council supports the development of a fund with the ability to direct all generated revenue from the Carbon Credits project for protecting, maintaining, and increasing urban forests and trees throughout the city.

SECTION 4: The Council supports the City's continued development of this and other innovative approaches to fund, acquire, and protect urban forests in Indianapolis.

SECTION 5. The Mayor is invited to join in this resolution by affixing his signature hereto.

SECTION 6. This resolution shall be in full force and effect upon adoption and compliance with IC 36-3-4-14.

The foregoing was passed by the City-County Council this _____ day of _____, 2022, at _____ p.m.

ATTEST:

Vop Osili
President, City-County Council

SaRita Hughes
Clerk, City-County Council

Presented by me to the Mayor this _____ day of _____, 2022.

SaRita Hughes
Clerk, City-County Council

Approved and signed by me this _____ day of _____, 2022.

Joseph H. Hogsett, Mayor