

RESOLUTION # 20 - _____

RESOLUTION ESTABLISHING A ZERO-NET LOSS URBAN TREE CANOPY POLICY FOR
THE CITY OF ASHEVILLE, NC

WHEREAS, our urban forest provides a multitude of environmental benefits including: improving air quality, water quality, and soil quality; reducing storm water runoff, erosion, sedimentation, and flooding; providing shade, evaporative cooling, and a diversity of habitats for wildlife and pollinators; reducing ambient air temperature as much as 20 degrees in the summer months, and;

WHEREAS, our urban forest provides a multitude of social and public health benefits that include: reducing heat-related illnesses; reducing illnesses such as asthma, attention deficit disorder, and obesity; reducing the length of hospital stays; reducing noise pollution; reducing stress, and reducing exposure to harmful UV rays, and;

WHEREAS, our urban forest provides a multitude of economic benefits including: improving retail and tourist environments; increasing property values; decreasing storm water treatment costs; reducing energy consumption and electricity costs, and;

WHEREAS, Asheville's urban forest sequesters 65,000 tons of carbon each year, valued at \$3,000,000 per year, and reduces storm water runoff by 18 million gallons a year, along with providing shading and evaporative cooling, strongly contributing to Asheville's energy transition goals and climate resilience, and;

WHEREAS, an urban forest canopy analysis commissioned by the City of Asheville and the Asheville Urban Forestry Commission documented a canopy loss of 6.4%₂ or 891 acres of trees over a 10-year period (an area larger than Central Park in New York City) with a subsequent loss of environmental, social and economic benefits and values; and a NASA study documented a substantial on-going spike in the urban heat island effect, particularly in areas with marginalized communities, and;

WHEREAS, it is critically important to reverse this trend to provide a healthy environment and environmental equity; to make Asheville as climate resilient as possible; and to provide for a sustainable future:

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF ASHEVILLE THAT THE CITY OF ASHEVILLE WILL:

1. Employ policies, practices, scientifically managed programs, and partnerships to achieve a zero-net loss of urban tree canopy, maintaining the urban forest canopy at no less than the current (2018) level at 44.5%, with a goal to increase canopy cover to 50% by 2040.
2. Establish a Comprehensive Urban Forestry Program as soon as practical that includes updated ordinances, a professional urban forester, and an urban forest master plan to help guide the future of Asheville's urban forest and green infrastructure in an effective and efficient manner.
3. Conduct City operations, establishment and maintenance of public infrastructure, rights of way, facilities, and park projects in tandem with the objective of the conservation, replacement, and maintenance of trees, using state-of-the science technology and best management practices.
4. Develop partnerships to educate the public and private sector on the benefits and values of urban forests and urban forest conservation to build broad community support and participation in the stewardship of Asheville's urban forest.