

Committee of the Whole Committee

Meeting date: February 2, 2022

Subject: Growing Shade: tree canopy enhancement and preservation tool

District(s), Member(s): ALL

Policy/Legal Reference: Development Guide (Minn. Stat. § 473.145)

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Division/Department: Community Development

Proposed Action

No action necessary. This is an information item only.

Background

[Growing Shade](https://metrotransitm.n.shinyapps.io/growing-shade/) is a new tool for improving the equity and sustainability of the Twin Cities region through tree canopy enhancement and preservation. Equity and sustainability are two outcomes of the Thrive 2040 regional policy plan which Growing Shade makes actionable. Growing Shade can be accessed at: <https://metrotransitm.n.shinyapps.io/growing-shade/> or at <https://metro council.org/growingshade>.

Growing Shade is predicated on the fact that trees help the region thrive. Benefits from trees include cooler temperatures, improved air quality, cleaner stormwater, improved mental health, and enhanced biodiversity. Enhancing and preserving tree canopy cover is an actionable step to create healthy and resilient places.

Trees additionally connect to regional issues and priorities. Public health, environmental justice, climate change, and natural resource conservation all intersect with the tree canopy. Growing Shade provides tree planting efforts and ongoing maintenance with new perspectives, rigorous science, and thoughtful synthesis.

Growing Shade combines **local stories** and an **interactive mapping tool** to inform tree canopy enhancement and preservation.

- **Local stories** educate and explain considerations for enhancing and preserving the tree canopy. The following stories are profiled.
 - Equity. Frogtown Green advocates for environmental justice through tree planting.
 - Restoration. Lower Phalen Creek Project is healing Dakota culture and land through restoration.
 - Preservation. Washington Conservation District works to preserve and restore forests.
 - Education. Brooklyn Center Community Schools engage youth in creating greenspace.
 - Maintenance. Tree Trust emphasizes the importance of tree care and maintenance.
- The **interactive mapping tool** uses priority layers to synthesize data and identify areas where planting, preserving, and maintaining trees can yield multiple benefits in the community. Customizable reports for cities, townships, unorganized territories, neighborhoods, and individual census block groups contain the following information:
 - Tree canopy status. Compare the tree canopy within a selected area to the region average.
 - Prioritization. Understand that the benefits of planting a tree depend on its location.
 - Race and income disparities. Contextualize the inequitable distribution of trees.
 - Temperature. Learn about the potential for cooling summer temperatures with trees.