

Urban Forestry Updates

City Council - Parks, Art and Culture Committee

October 07, 2025



DENVER
PARKS & RECREATION

GAME PLAN
for a Healthy City



DENVER'S URBAN FOREST - OVERVIEW

Trees:

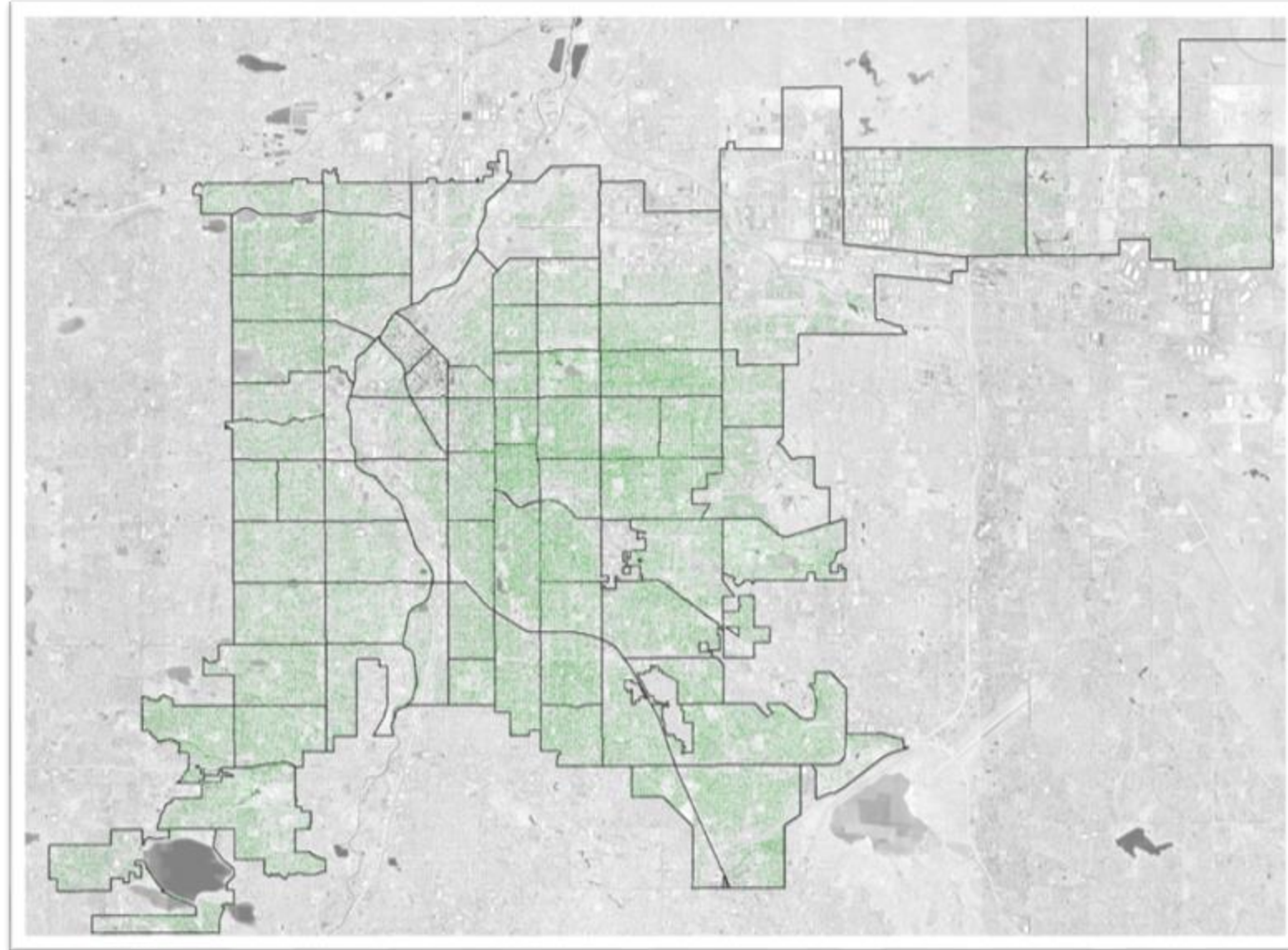
- 2.2 million estimated
- ~15% public
- Detailed information not collected for private trees

Diversity:

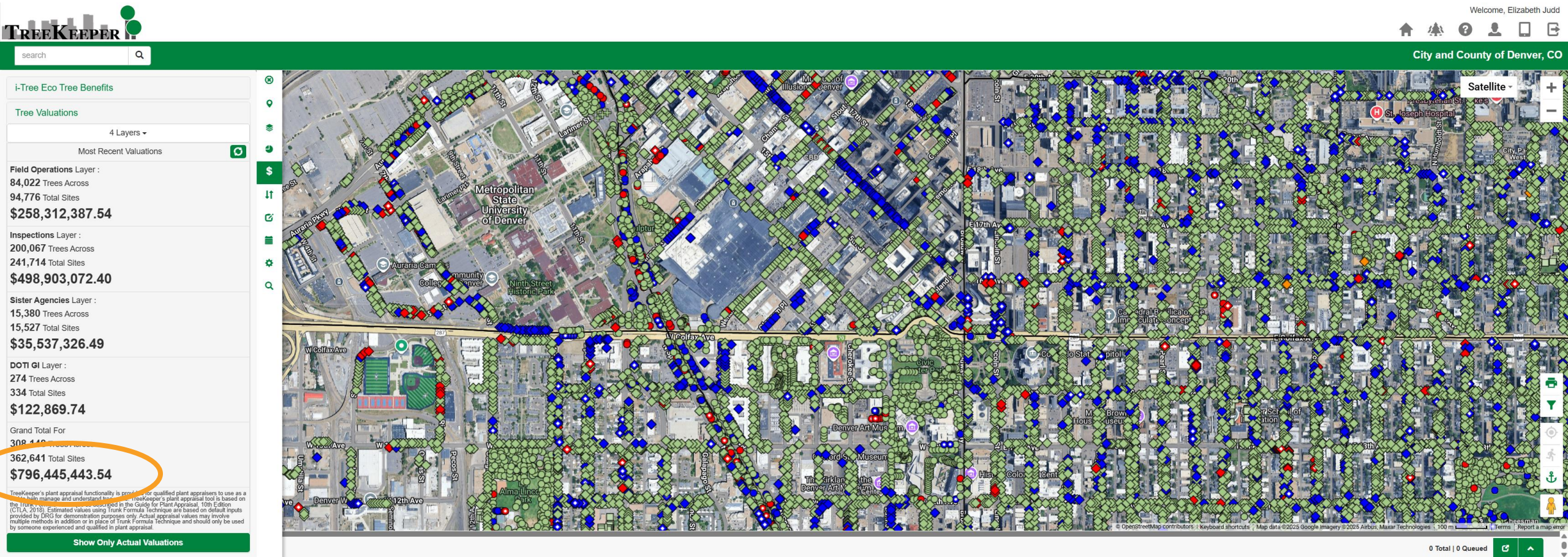
- ~400 unique species
- Maple, ash, oak & honeylocust most common
- 20% genus/10% species goal

Canopy:

- 3.6 – 37.5% canopy cover by neighborhood
- Increase of 2% from 2014-2020
- 11% with DIA and 15% without



DENVER'S URBAN FOREST – ASSET VALUE



<https://tinyurl.com/denvertreeinventory>



DENVER'S URBAN FOREST - ECOSYSTEM SERVICES



i-Tree Eco Tree Benefits

4 Layers ▾

330,496

Calculated Trees



Total Benefits Over

20 years ▾

\$27,684,299.60

Carbon Dioxide Uptake

\$5,548,817.82

Carbon Sequestered 64,362,759.18 pounds

CO2 Equivalent 235,996,783.64 pounds

Storm Water Mitigation

\$3,689,675.16

Runoff Avoided 412,900,003.75 gallons

Rainfall Intercepted 1,752,262,810.05 gallons

Air Pollution Removal

\$18,445,806.62

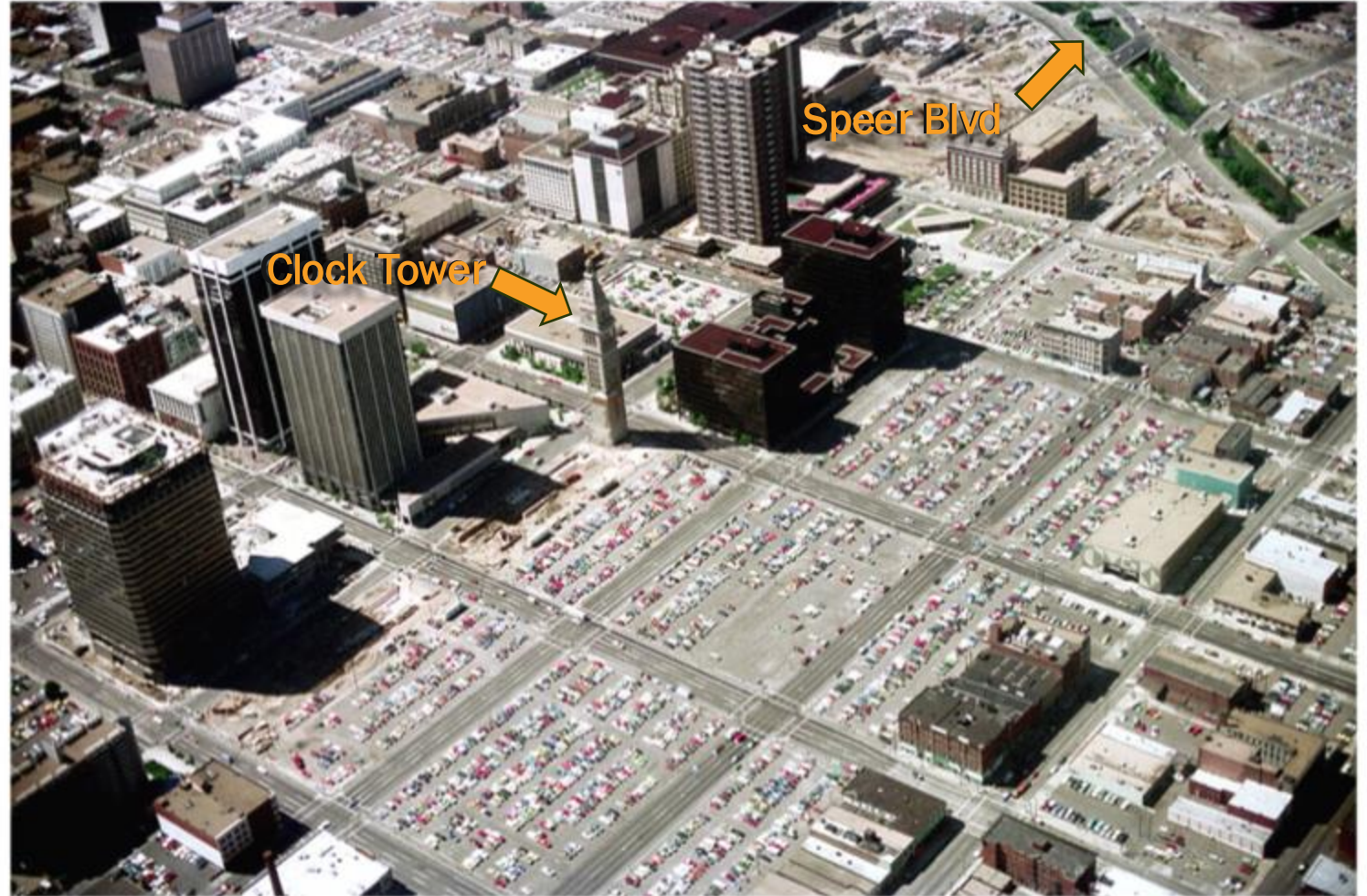
Carbon Monoxide 636,971.29 ounces

Ozone 21,730,692.56 ounces

Nitrogen Dioxide 7,619,053.81 ounces

Sulfur Dioxide 823,785.48 ounces

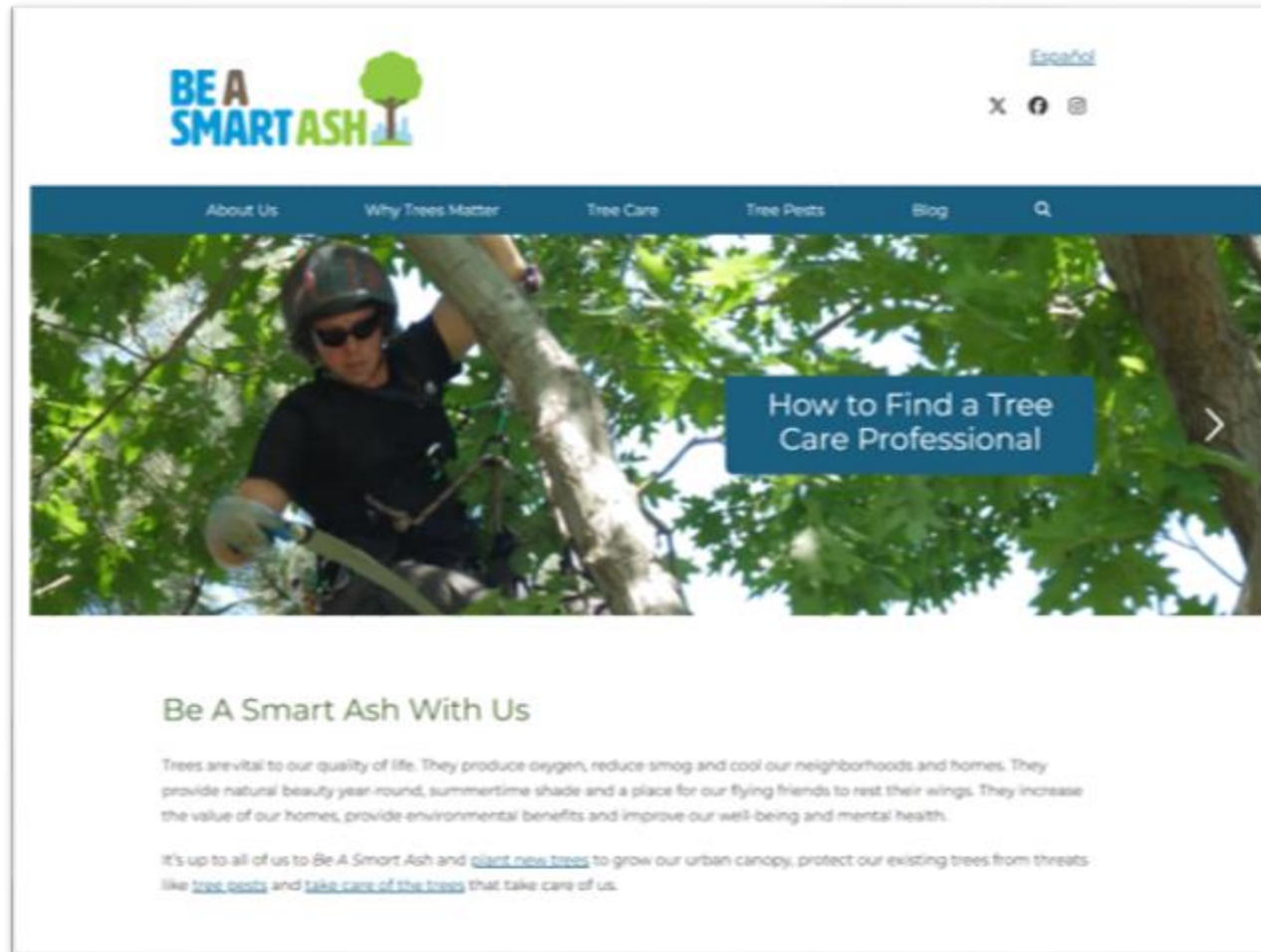
PM_{2.5} 1,353,315.27 ounces



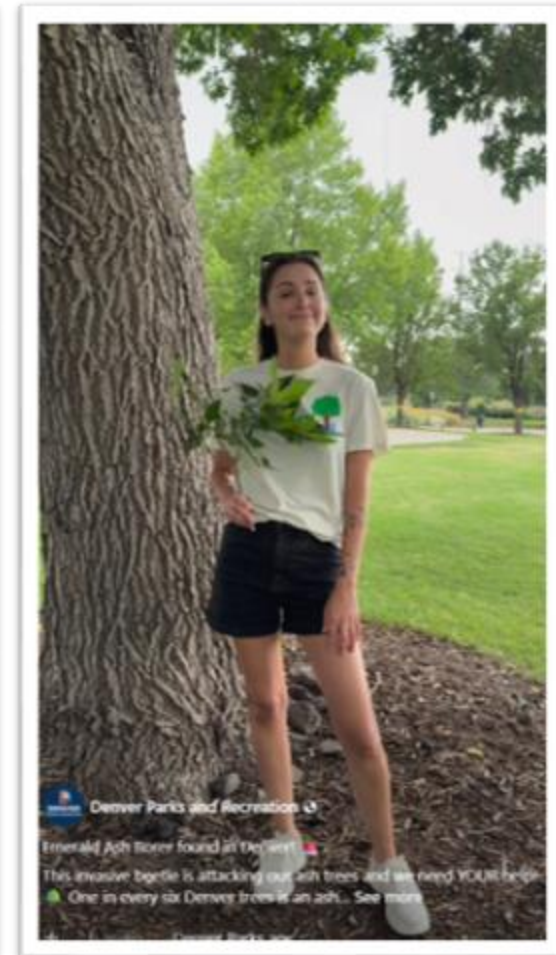
Downtown has changed since the urban revitalization of the 1960-70s.

EMERALD ASH BORER (EAB)

- June 2025
- Congress Park +
- ~36,000 public ash
- Continue BASA program
- Monitor and document progress
- Evolve as best practice changes
- Communications & education in place
- Removal and enforcement will increase as trees decline



www.beasmartash.org

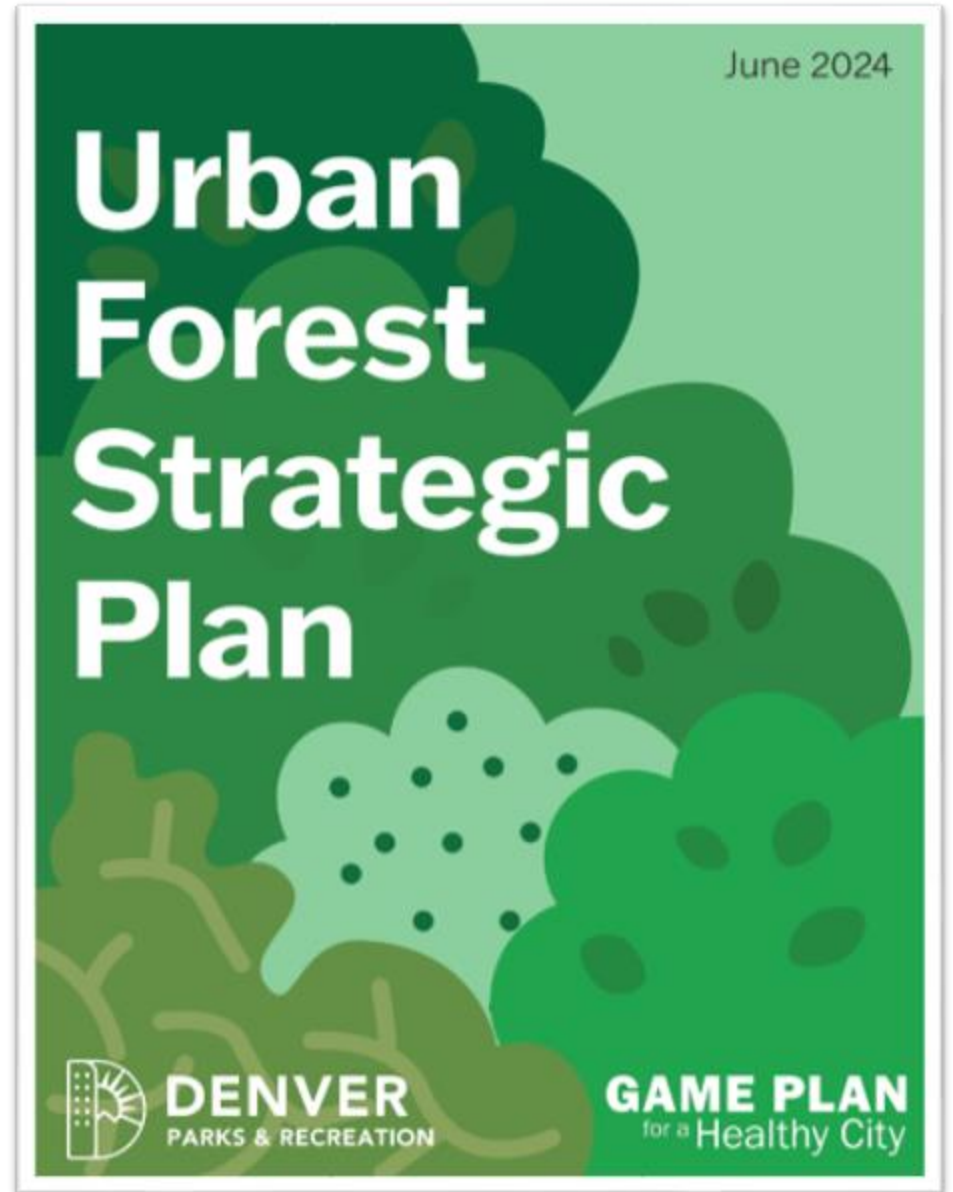


<https://www.facebook.com/reel/701273289337297>

PLAN OBJECTIVES:

- Develop a vision
- Review & refine canopy goal
- Evaluate maintenance options & possible funding scenarios
- Best practices
- Private tree planting & protection
- Best use of partners
- Internal coordination
- Propose regulatory updates
- Implementation & update process

<https://tinyurl.com/DenverUFSP>



PLAN GOALS & STRATEGIES:

1. Increase Canopy Citywide

Strategies:

- 1A.** Identify canopy coverage goals that are specific to the Denver climate and environment.
- 1B.** Protect and maintain existing canopy cover on public and private property.
- 1C.** Prioritize new tree plantings and infrastructure where they will be most beneficial: where trees are lacking, specifically in under-invested neighborhoods, and along multi-modal street networks.

Goal

2. Promote and Invest in the Community Stewardship of the Urban Forest

Strategies:

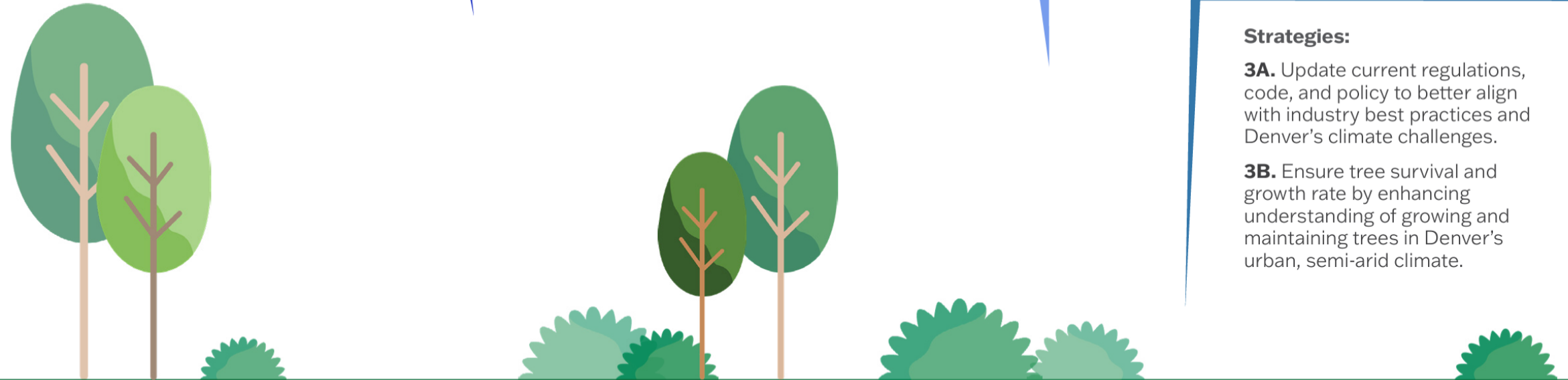
- 2A.** Expand education and communication to increase public awareness of the urban forest.
- 2B.** Expand forestry programs and partnerships.

Goal

3. Recalibrate Denver's Urban Forestry Practices

Strategies:

- 3A.** Update current regulations, code, and policy to better align with industry best practices and Denver's climate challenges.
- 3B.** Ensure tree survival and growth rate by enhancing understanding of growing and maintaining trees in Denver's urban, semi-arid climate.





ACTION ITEM PROGRESS:

38 total Actions/Sub-actions

- Complete: 4
- Underway: 15
- Ongoing: 14
- Not started: 5

* Five-year update cycle



ACTION ITEM IMPLEMENTATION:

Complete:

- Resources updates/creation
- Stakeholder Committee
- Rotational Pruning Analysis
- Staffing Analysis

Not started:

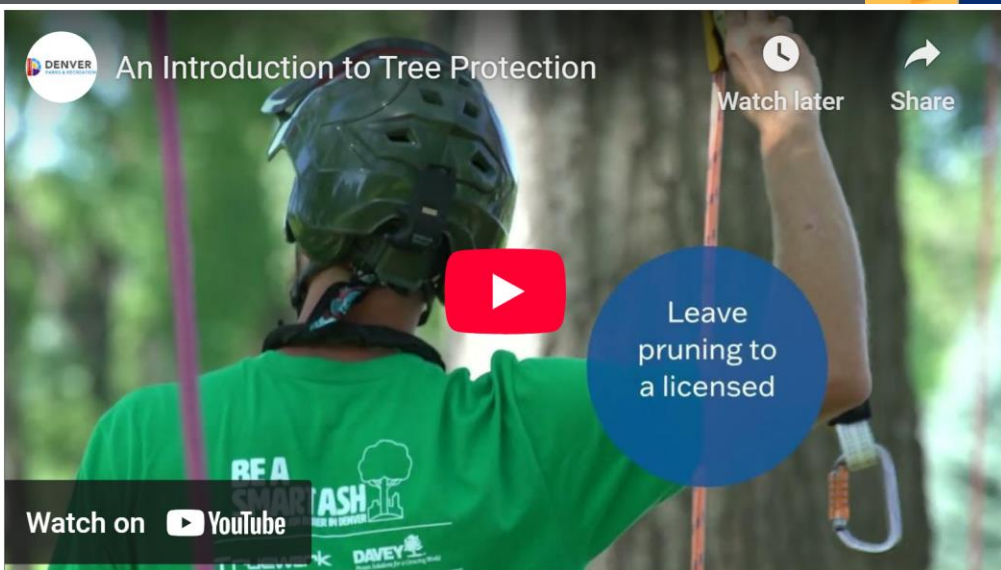
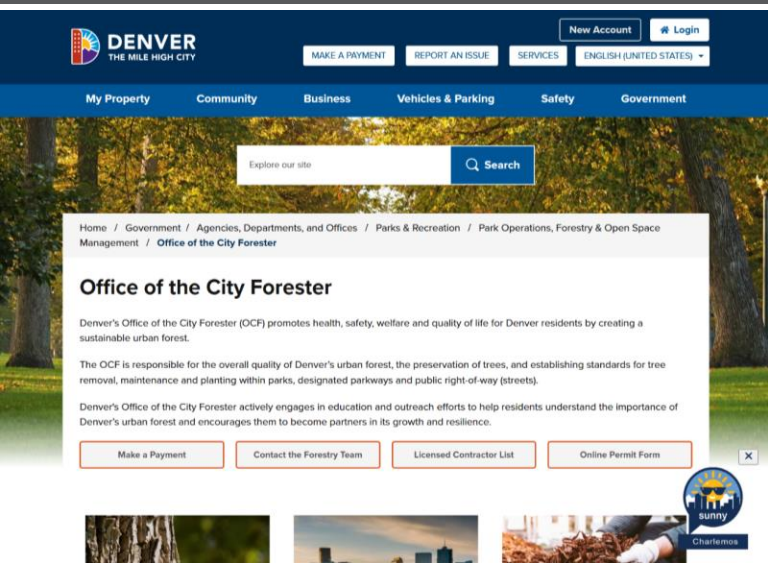
- XO 123 mitigation
- Increased enforcement
- Implement rotational pruning
- City nursery
- Test lab

Progress/Ongoing:

- Canopy goals
- Understory planting
- Legacy tree program
- Tree protection
- Partnerships
- Planting requirements
- Planting instructions
- Incentive program
- PR Campaign
- Educate youth



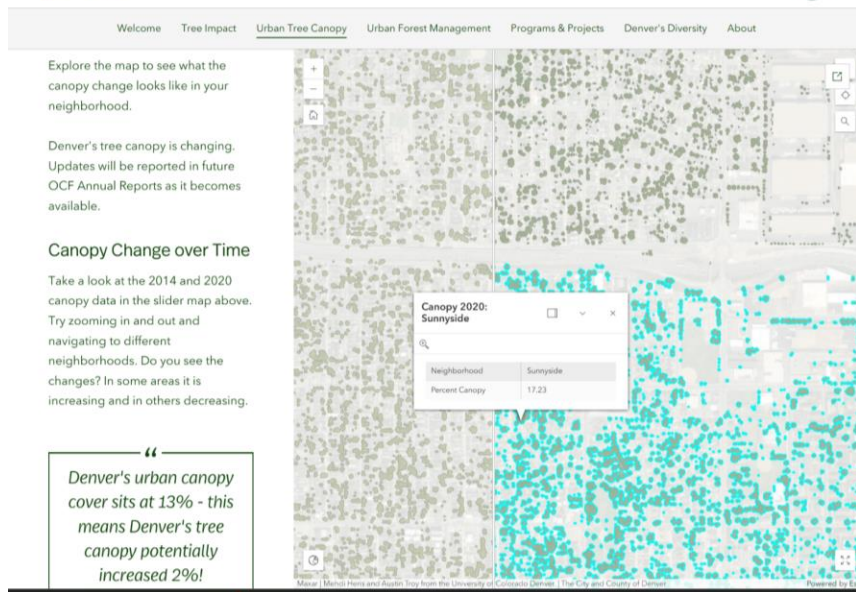
2B.2 PUBLIC RESOURCE HUB



OFFICE OF THE CITY FORESTER APPROVED STREET TREE LIST

The list can be filtered by using the drop-down menus. Selections can be made from multiple drop-downs to customize results.

Family	Botanical Name	Cultivar(s)	Common Name	USDA Hardiness Zone	Water Requirement	Salt Tolerance	Water Quality Area	Fits Under Overhead Lines (25' ht)	Notes
Sapindaceae	Acer buergerianum	Streetwise	Trident Maple	5			✓		
Sapindaceae	Acer campestre		Hedge Maple	5			✓		
Sapindaceae	Acer campestre	JFS Shichtel2	Streetside Maple	5			✓		
Sapindaceae	Acer campestre	Panacek	Metro Gold Hedge Maple	5b			✓		
Sapindaceae	Acer glabrum		Rocky Mountain Maple	5					
Sapindaceae	Acer grandidentatum		Bigtooth Maple	4					
Sapindaceae	Acer grandidentatum	JFS KW13AGRA	High Peaks Maple	5					
Sapindaceae	Acer grandidentatum	JFS-NuMex 3	Mesa Glow Bigtooth Maple	4					
Sapindaceae	Acer grandidentatum	Schmidt	Rocky Mountain Glow Maple	4					



UFSP PRIORITIES MAP APPLICATION:

Projects using the map include:

- CASR private property planting
- CPD Landscape code updates
- CPD Park Hill Park Action Planning
- DOTI Green Infrastructure
- DOTI Bond proposal
- DOTI ENVISION
- DOTI sidewalk gaps

Goals and Strategies

Urban Forest Priorities Map

This index is a visual representation of the Denver Priority Planting Areas. The represented layers are based off of socioeconomic, built environment, health, and transportation data.

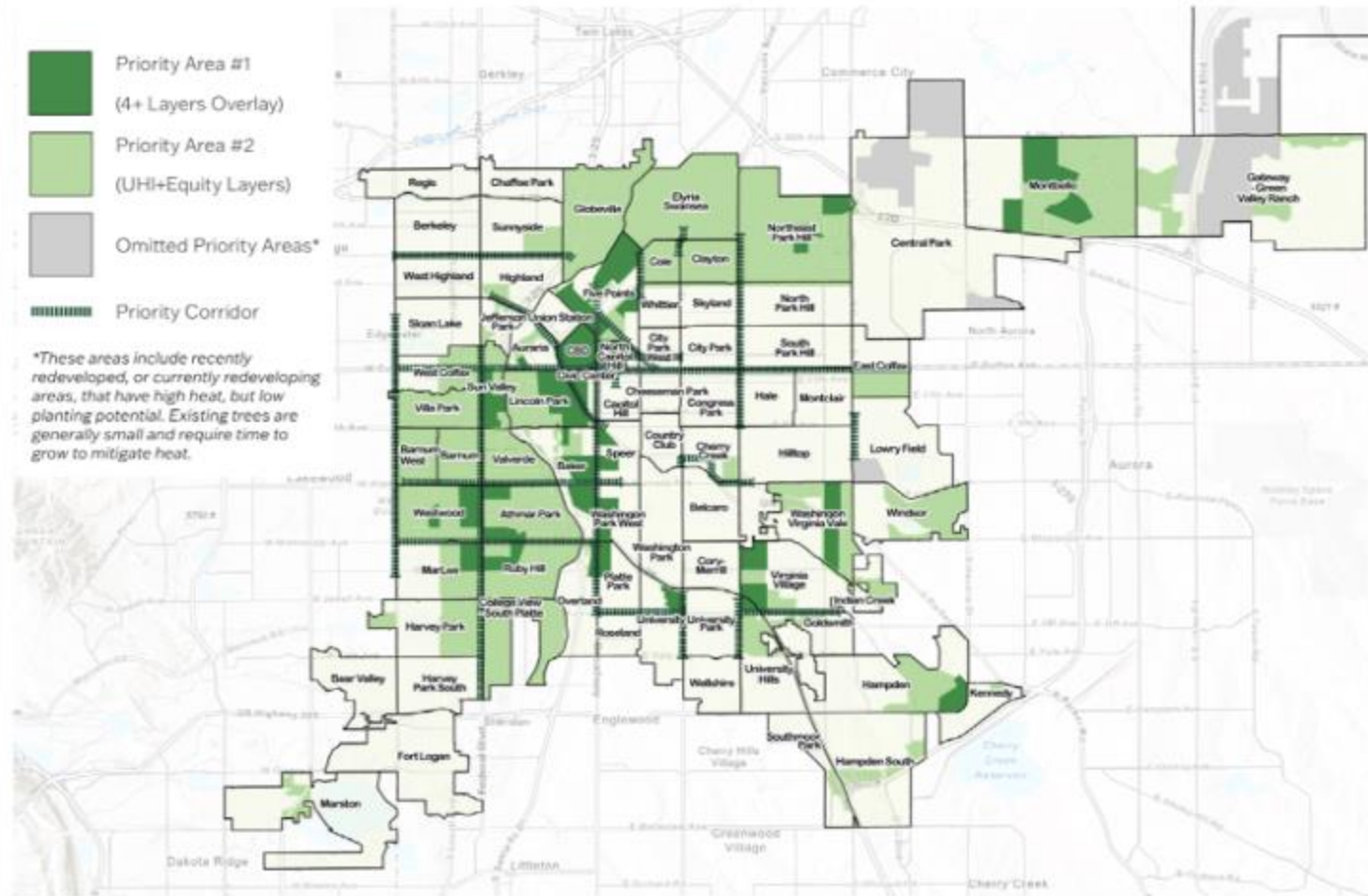


Figure 18: Tree Priority Overlay Network

What determines a priority area?

The Tree Priority Network considers existing factors as well as future networks aligned with other Denver planning documents. The following factors were considered:

- Disadvantaged Communities - Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool*from geoplatform.gov (Low score)
- Pedestrian Demand Index (High Score)
- Safe Routes to School (High score)
- Tree Canopy (Low Canopy Score)
- Heat Risk Priority Zones from the ParkServe Database (High Score)
- DOTI Sidewalk Priority (Tier 1)
- Blueprint Future Streets: Bike Network Priority (High Score)
- Blueprint Future Streets (Downtown Arterials, Main Street Arterials, Mixed Use Arterials, with high scores)

Highest Priority Areas are regions within the City that had 4+ overlapping factors.

High Priority Streets are networks that had 3+ overlapping factors.

Major corridors that contain multiple intersections are noted as a priority in the entirety of the street in an effort to create more connected networks.

CANOPY GOALS DEVELOPMENT PROGRESS:

References Action 1A.1:
Develop canopy goals for each Neighborhood Context (as identified in Blueprint Denver)





Recommendations Matrix

Action	Timeline	Responsible	Supporting	Resources
Strategy 1A: Identify canopy coverage goals that are specific to the Denver climate and environment.				
1A.1 Develop canopy goals for each Neighborhood Context as identified in Blueprint Denver.	Immediate	OCF	CPD, DPR	Existing staff and GIS resources
1A.2 Develop understory goals and requirements based on each Neighborhood Context to create a more conducive planting area.	Immediate	OCF	CPD, DOTI	Existing staff
1A.3 Identify and coordinate partnerships to support new tree plantings.	Mid-Ongoing	OCF	DPR	Limited existing staff; Staffing needs: dedicated forestry outreach & education position
Strategy 1B: Create a "Legacy" or "Heritage" tree program that increases public awareness for both public and private significant trees.				
1B.1 Create a "Legacy" or "Heritage" tree program that increases public awareness for both public and significant private trees.	Immediate	OCF	CPD	Existing staff
1B.2 Provide greater tree protection for trees on private property by updating Denver Zoning Code/development regulations.	Short	CPD/OCF		Existing staff; Consultant and one time funding needed
1B.3 Revisit and update canopy mitigation requirements per Sec 57-25.	Short	OCF	CPD	Existing staff
1B.4 Revisit and update canopy mitigation requirements per XO 123.	Immediate	OCF	DPR	Existing staff
Strategy 1C: Prioritize new tree plantings and infrastructure where they will be most beneficial: where trees are lacking, specifically in under-invested neighborhoods, and along multi-modal street networks.				
1C.1 Increase canopy coverage in the Tree Priority Network.	Immediate	OCF	All	Existing staff
1C.2 Develop an incentive program to encourage Denverites to plant new trees practicing "Right Tree, Right Place" principles.	Short-Ongoing	OCF	CPD, CASR	Existing staff; Consultant needed & one time funding; Staffing needs: dedicated forestry outreach & education position.
Strategy 2A: Expand education and communication to increase public awareness of the urban forest.				
2A.1 Create a City-Wide PR Campaign for the General Public.	Short	OCF	DPR	Limited existing staff; Staffing needs: dedicated forestry outreach & education position.
2A.2 Educate youth about the importance of trees and the urban forest.	Immediate-Ongoing	OCF	DPR	
2A.3 Train community groups and organizations on current industry best practices for planting and maintenance to promote alignment across all organizations.	Short	OCF	All	

Action	Timeline	Responsible	Supporting	Resources
Strategy 2B: Expand Forestry programs and partnerships.				
2B.1 Align and coordinate regional partners and programs.	Short	OCF	All	Limited existing staff; Staffing needs: dedicated forestry outreach & education position.
2B.2 Create a public resource hub.	Short	OCF	DPR	
2B.3 Create an Urban Forestry Advisory Stakeholder Committee.	Short	OCF	All	
Strategy 3A: Update current regulations, code, and policy to better align with industry best practices and Denver's climate challenges.				
3A.1 Explore and refine Forestry's departmental structure, influence and authority across the urban forest.	Mid	OCF	All	Existing staff; Staffing needs: additional enforcement positions.
3A.2 Update Maintenance practices to match industry standards.	Mid	OCF	All	Existing staff; Consultants for feasibility study related to fees and rotational pruning and one time funding; Staffing needs: inventory maintenance; Ongoing Funding needs: hazardous/emergency response may require additional funding"
3A.3 Update Development requirements with interdepartmental support and coordination including zoning code landscape requirements and landscape and forestry related guidelines and manuals.	Short-Mid	OCF	CPD/DOTI	Existing staff; Consultants for staffing analysis; Staffing/funding needs: additional maintenance crew; Staffing needs: additional enforcement positions.
3A.4 Update Planting standards to match industry best practices.	Short	OCF	CPD, DPR	Existing staff; Consultants could support.
Strategy 3b: Ensure tree survival and growth rate by enhancing understanding of growing and maintaining trees in Denver's urban, semi-arid climate.				
3B.1. Develop an Urban Forest Test Lab Program, including identifying funding sources and leveraging non-profit, private, and city agency partnerships.	Long	OCF	All	Existing staff; Staffing needs: dedicated forestry outreach & education position

NEXT STEPS

1. Continue items in progress (code updates, canopy goals, resource/educational materials, etc)
2. Identify feasibility of advancing shorter term action items
3. Incorporate action items into annual work planning
4. Continue to explore funding options
5. Continue tracking and reporting progress

6. QUESTIONS?

Thank You!



2025 Arbor Day Poster Contest Winner