

**2018-2019 BUDGET QUESTION**  
***Response to Request for Information***

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**DEPARTMENT:** Development Services

**REQUEST NO.:** 161

**REQUESTED BY:** Tovo

**DATE REQUESTED:** 9/4/18

**DATE POSTED:** 9/10/18

**REQUEST:** Please provide greater detail surrounding the \$307,000 investment in the urban forestry program. What will this \$307,000 be used for within the urban forestry program? How much is currently in the Urban Forest Replenishment Fund? Could this increase to the urban forestry program be funded through the Urban Forest Replenishment fund?

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**RESPONSE:**

The breakdown of the \$307,000 is as follows: \$107,000 is for a new Environmental Compliance Specialist Senior, and \$200,000 is for third-party contracting services.

Currently, the Community Trees team receives calls regarding potential violations of the City's Tree Ordinance. In all cases, the work is either (1) already permitted, (2) not permitted, or (3) not required to obtain a permit.

For permitted work, a permit fee has already been collected for the appropriate tree review and inspections. For unpermitted work, an investigation is conducted, including a determination of the permit that would have been required. For instances where permits are not required, there is no permit fee that will be collected.

The funding in the FY 2019 Proposed Budget is to provide for tree code enforcement of unpermitted work and work that does not require a permit. The approach will be as follows:

1. The inspection stemming from the call will be routed to the third-party contracting service for an initial review. If it is determined that no permit is required, then the matter will be closed.
2. If the third-party contractor determines that the work did require a tree permit, then the matter will be referred to the Environmental Compliance Specialist Senior for further investigation.

The Urban Forest Replenishment Fund balance as of August 31, 2018 was \$4,288,041. Over \$2.2 million is budgeted in FY 2019 in the Urban Forest Replenishment fund to meet the needs of existing, ongoing programs and partnerships that support Austin's urban forest. Due to the success of these existing programs, it is anticipated that over the next five years the fund will supply over \$11.0 million of funding. Additionally, a new state law was passed during the 2017 special legislative session that limits a city's ability to regulate tree removal. This law will result in an estimated 35% decrease in deposits to the Urban Forest Replenishment Fund. The Urban Forest Replenishment Fund does not provide a stable revenue source from which recurring operating expenses, such as personnel, should be funded.