

Soil Volume and Quality Standards Resolution

WHEREAS, Trees in Austin's streetscape provide significantly to human physical and community health;

WHEREAS, studies across the United States have shown that the majority of street trees die within 13 years of planting due to poor soil conditions;

WHEREAS, city programs and regulations such as Great Streets and Design Standards require trees but omit appropriate sustainable concepts pertaining to tree growth requirements.

WHEREAS, the majority of tree planting in Austin's streetscape provide only a small root environment, which is insufficient space to support large shade trees;

WHEREAS, current Great Streets tree pits provide less than 20% of the needed soil volume required for typical street tree species to adequately develop and eventually produce significant shade;

WHEREAS, tree root conflicts with utilities can be minimized or eliminated by utilizing innovative solutions;

WHEREAS, a development site's tree planting locations may be solely limited to the area within the public right-of-way;

WHEREAS, cities across the country including among others Charlotte, North Carolina, Houston, Texas, and Grand Rapids, Michigan have successfully incorporated greater root volumes in their downtown plantings with great success;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF AUSTIN

That the City Manager is directed to review the adequacy of soil volume and quality specifications in streetscape plantings, with the goal of increasing the root space and soil to extend the benefits of trees and increase sustainability and future costs to replace trees;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED

That the City Manager is directed to evaluate the standard details and specifications used in all streetscape tree planting projects with regard to soil quality, soil volume, species characteristics, and preparation;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED

That the City Manager shall document the results and findings of the assessment and alternatives and shall provide recommendations to the City Council by March 21, 2014.