

AUDIT SCOPE STATEMENT – August 22, 2022

City Tree Canopy Preservation and Expansion

Background

The city's trees are city assets and provide significant benefits to residents including reducing air and water pollution, decreasing energy costs, moderating high temperatures, improving public health, and increasing property values. The city's trees are in decline due to age, disease, and weather.

The Parks and Recreation Department manages city trees - trees on city property and street trees (trees in the city's right-of-way).¹ These public trees plus trees on private property make up the city's urban forest and provide a canopy of leaves over Kansas City, Missouri. In 2018, the city's tree canopy was estimated to cover 31% of the land area within the city limits.² Management of the city's public trees in the urban forest includes maintaining a tree inventory, regulating the removal of existing trees, coordinating planting of new trees, and performing tree pruning.

Why audit removal and planting of city trees?

The City Council's declaration of a climate and ecological emergency³ and approvals of the Climate Protection⁴ and the Urban Forest Master⁵ plans provide policy direction for the city to actively address climate change. The Urban Forest Master Plan's emphasis on conserving and restoring city trees through active management is one strategy to address climate change. Because maximum benefits from trees are not realized until trees are mature, it is important to focus efforts on tree preservation and expansion early and remain consistent with these efforts.

While the Parks and Recreation Department is responsible for management of city trees, actions by other city departments, such as the Public Works and the Water Services departments, affect city trees. Successful department coordination of tree removal and planting impacts the city's ability to achieve its climate and tree canopy goals.

Audit objective

Our objective is to answer the following question:

- Do departments remove and replace city trees in a way that supports the city's goal to increase the tree canopy?

Audit methods

We will interview city staff from departments that have a part in the planning, removal, and planting of city trees to understand current practices. We will also review city tree related ordinances and regulations, plans, processes, and data and compare to current practices.

Anticipated release date

We plan to issue the audit report in December 2022.

¹ *Administrative Regulation 5-7, "Tree Canopy Preservation & Expansion,"* March 9, 2021.

² *Kansas City, Missouri: Urban Forest Master Plan – Fall 2018,* Davey Resource Group, p. v.

³ *Resolution 210967,* November 4, 2021.

⁴ *Resolution 080754,* July 24, 2008.

⁵ *Resolution 200143,* May 21, 2020.



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Office of the City Auditor

Douglas Jones, CGAP, CIA, CRMA – City Auditor
21st Floor, City Hall, 414 E. 12th St.
Kansas City, Missouri 64106

816-513-3300

cityauditor@kcmo.org

[@KCMOCityAuditor](https://twitter.com/KCMOCityAuditor)

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