

## RFP 25-007PWSM Appendix I Grant Proposal

### Scope of Work:

The City of Dayton (City) is a diverse city located in southwest Ohio. Since its peak in the 1960s, Dayton has lost almost 50% of its population. City advocates, leaders, and community partners are focused on efforts to revitalize the city, stabilize the population, and help our residents thrive. In 2017, Dayton was listed as one of the most segregated cities in America with 58% of the total Black population in Dayton living in areas deemed low or very low opportunity (Gurnig, 2017). Dayton's submission for the Urban and Community Forestry Grant is one example of a community effort to ensure historic policies and experiences of our city's past do not wholly define the opportunities and successes of our future.

Similar to our community's inequitable access to opportunity, Dayton's residents have unequal access to urban tree canopy. Like many other rust belt cities, areas within Dayton with the highest tree canopy coverage of 35-46% occur within higher income communities, whereas lower income neighborhoods experience drastically less canopy (Figure A). Current tree coverage city-wide is estimated at 22.5% with as low as 5-8% canopy coverage within some of our lowest income neighborhoods (iTree).

Over several decades, Dayton faced challenges that negatively impacted our urban forest; two of which fall into the category of natural disasters. Ohio was one of the first states to be impacted by the emerald ash borer and there are several other active invasive pest species including Asian long horn beetle and spotted lantern fly. Compounding the losses to public trees due to blight and pests, Dayton experienced a large EF 4 tornado on Memorial Day in 2019. This storm went through several northeast neighborhoods and caused significant damage, destroying hundreds of trees in its path.

In addition to natural disasters, the City's population loss and subsequent reduction in income tax revenues resulted in fewer resources for tree maintenance and plantings. One of the biggest disinvestments within the general fund was to the Public Works Department, specifically the Forestry and Parks division. With limited budget, the City is unable to adequately manage its urban forest and prepare for or recovery from environmental and economic challenges. The deferred maintenance has a compounding impact. First, many residents complain about the lack of maintenance for the trees that exist within the city and the liability they present. Second, due to the lack of resources needed to care for our trees, many have developed diseases or been impacted by invasive insects and plants. This situation has created a negative view of trees within the city. Many residents believe that trees invite crime, cause property or other physical damages, and are unsightly.

To address these compounding issues and to improve the overall health and perception of Dayton's urban forest, the City intendeds to use this grant opportunity to develop a robust Urban Forestry Master Plan and implement the recommendation in partnership with City of Dayton's residents to improve perception on trees and increase our urban canopy. Our project has three main phases:

1. Phase 1: Complete a Tree Inventory and Urban Tree Canopy Assessment
2. Phase 2: Create an Urban Forestry Master Plan
3. Phase 3: Implement Recommendations of the Plan through tree maintenance, increasing urban tree canopy, and education and outreach sessions with the community

This grant opportunity is vital to the City of Dayton and our residents for the following reasons:

1. To empower the City to address overdue maintenance and preventative care for our urban forest throughout the City;
2. To change the perception of our residents regarding trees, building appreciation and respect for the value of our urban forest; and,
3. To address historic disinvestments and neglect within our low-income and minority communities by expanding our tree canopy within disadvantaged Census Tracts.

This project directly aligns with the goals outlined in the *Ten-Year Urban Forestry Action Plan: 2016-2026* and the State of Ohio's Action Plan. Specifically, it will help promote the goals outlined in the *Urban Forestry Action Plan* of (1) promoting the role of urban and community forestry in human health, (2) strengthening forest health and biodiversity for long-term resilience, (3) improving urban and community forest management, maintenance, and stewardship, and (4) increasing public awareness and education.

### **1. Implementation Strategy/Methodology/Timeline:**

This project will consist of three primary phases that work to address multiple issues within the urban forest including inequality in access to tree canopy, heat island effects, diseased/dying trees, invasive species, and extreme storm events. This project will focus on 57 census track that are disadvantaged according to the Climate an Economic Justice Screening Tool and are located within the City of Dayton (Figure B).

#### ***Phase 1: Tree Inventory & Urban Tree Canopy Assessment | Year 1, 12 – 18 month duration***

*(Goal Alignment: Improving urban and community forest management, maintenance, and stewardship)*

The initial step to this project will be to conduct a tree inventory and urban tree canopy assessment. The City will issue a request for proposals and select a qualified, experienced vendor to conduct a tree inventory covering the entirety of the City to serve as the basis for an Urban Forest Master Plan (Phase 2). Data collected during this step will include site characteristics, tree species, condition, and management needs. This data will be collected in a manner that can be integrated into the City's existing GIS infrastructure. In addition to the tree inventory, an Urban Tree Canopy Assessment (UTC) will be conducted to identify preferred planting areas to mitigate injustice, heat island effects, and runoff. The last tree inventory was conducted in 1989 so the renewed inventory and canopy assessment will be vital to understanding our tree canopy needs and how much tree canopy exists within the city.

As part of all the City of Dayton's competitive bidding process, we work with our Human Relations Council to set goals to ensure the work has diverse and equitable consultants and contractors working on the project (Dayton HRC). The RFP will take anywhere from 4-6 months before receiving approval by City of Dayton Commission. Once the consultant is hired, the project team will work with the consultant to complete the Tree Inventory and UTC assessment by quarter 2 of Year 2. Once completed, the tree inventory and UTC will provide an up-to-date GIS database detailing site characteristics, tree species, condition, and management needs.

#### ***Phase 2: Urban Forest Master Plan | Year 2, 9 – 12 month duration***

*(Goal Alignment: promoting the role of urban and community forestry in human health, improving urban and community forest management, maintenance, and stewardship, and increasing public awareness and education.)*

Once the inventory and urban tree canopy assessment have been completed the next step will be to develop an Urban Forest Master Plan, focusing on disadvantaged census tracts. This plan will utilize the tree inventory, urban tree canopy (UTC) assessment, existing policy and planning documents, and staff, stakeholder, and community input.

The planning process will focus on the assessment of community trees (those within public rights-of-way), the management needs of the urban forest, and the goals and needs of the people who care for and live among both public and private trees. The final Urban Forest Master Plan will address critical factors that impact tree management such as risk reduction and canopy sustainability as well as how trees can improve the social and climatic health of the city. The plan will be a long-term roadmap enabling Dayton to address tree maintenance in a prioritized manner providing social equity, and mitigating climate change and risk management. Lastly, this plan will include a cost-benefit analysis of recommendations and identify long-term financial strategies to ensure proper maintenance and upkeep of the urban forest to ensure budget cuts will not negatively impact the tree canopy moving forward.

One of the most important parts of the Master Plan will be public engagement. Dayton is home to many organizations, advocates and champions for urban trees. These partners will be engaged early on and will be utilized throughout the engagement process. Because some City of Dayton residents may have a negative perception of trees, this plan will assist with creating public engagement strategies to build a more positive relationship between the City's urban forest and residents. Forestry staff will work with community partners and the City of Dayton's Community Engagement Division to design and run community and neighborhood meetings to better understand residents' perspectives on the City's urban forest. For this project, we will follow the guidelines and best practices presented in Vibrant Cities Lab, including the Community Engagement Guide for Sustainable Communities (<https://www.vibrantcitieslab.com/toolkit/equity/>). We will use that to develop activities and information will be designed to educate residents about the importance of urban trees, share results from the inventory and assessment, and work to create avenues in which residents can engage in tree planting and upkeep. The city has over 40 neighborhood associations (out of 67 neighborhoods) who will be engaged in the process.

The community outreach component of the Master Plan and subsequent implementation will have several measurable outcomes. The City will track the number of residents engaged within each priority census tract, number of educational and outreach sessions held, a detailed contact list of residents who want to participate in plantings, and number of hits on our website and social media channels. Most importantly, we will integrate resident comments within the master plan and showcase how residents may continue to engage with the plan and shape their community's urban forest.