

# City of Poulsbo

Office of Mayor Rebecca Erickson



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## **Poulsbo Completes Urban Forest Assessment**

The City of Poulsbo has prepared a final report assessing the state of urban forests and tree cover within the City. The report was funded by the Washington State Department of Natural Resources (DNR) through a \$46,088 grant by their Urban and Community Forestry Program. The report was prepared through a partnership between the City of Poulsbo, Western Washington University (WWU), and the Poulsbo Tree Board.

The project focused on four areas:

- Conducting an Urban Tree Canopy Assessment
- Using GIS Data analysis of tree canopy data and census tracks to assist with equitable decision making
- Developing recommendations to assist with future updates to the City's Urban Forest Management and Maintenance Plan
- Supporting workforce development through paid internships for WWU students.

Temperature sensors were deployed around the city to determine the impact of trees on adjacent areas. The results confirmed what urban foresters have maintained for decades - as tree canopy cover increases, temperatures decrease.

The data from the report suggested a 30% decrease in canopy cover over the past 30 years. The largest decline in canopy cover occurred between 1994 and 2004 when total canopy cover in the city limits decreased from 51% to 33%. After a slight increase in the next decade, followed by another decline in the past 10 years, the current state is a 36% overall cover.

"The grant funding awarded by DNR has better helped the City understand the changes in tree canopy coverage over the past thirty years, areas most impacted, and innovative

proposed solutions to address heat mitigation,” said Mayor Becky Erickson. “We need to protect our existing trees and expand upon planting new ones.”

The report offered a robust outline of proposed solutions to address the canopy loss. Several highlights of those solutions include:

- Timely replanting of areas with tree loss
- Encouraging neighborhood tree plantings of recommended species
- Developing “floating gardens” in hard scaped areas such as parking lots
- Offering new community initiatives for planting native species
- Developing educational campaigns and public-private partnerships
- Evaluating tree retention policies and protective ordinances
- Removing invasive species
- Identifying priority areas in parks to increase canopy coverage.

“We are very thankful to our partners at Western Washington University and the Poulsbo Tree Board who helped put together these grant findings,” said Parks & Recreation Director Jeff Ozimek. “We’re looking forward to discussing the proposed solutions they developed to address the loss of canopy coverage.”

An overview of the project, the findings, and proposed mitigation solutions will be presented at a future City Council session later this year by City staff and the Poulsbo Tree Board.

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