

OFFERED BY COUNCILORS GABRIELA COLETTA, KENZIE BOK, LIZ BREADON, ARROYO, FLAHERTY, LARA, LOUIJEUNE, MEJIA, WORRELL AND FLYNN



CITY OF BOSTON IN CITY COUNCIL

ORDER FOR A HEARING REGARDING A TREE MITIGATION FUND FOR THE CITY OF BOSTON

WHEREAS, In 2022, the City of Boston recorded its hottest 30-day stretch in history with six days in a row of 90-degree weather, with many inland spots recording an eight-day heatwave. Over the last decade, Boston experienced more hot days and nights than any decade in the previous 50 years; *and*

WHEREAS, Extreme heat is already the number one cause of weather-related deaths, more than tornados, hurricanes, flooding, and cold weather combined. It is essential that we prepare for hotter summers as a public health and safety issue while ensuring everyone can thrive in the face of climate change; *and*

WHEREAS, According to the 2022 Heat Resilience Solutions Report, densely developed neighborhoods like Chinatown and East Boston store heat in asphalt, pavement, and dark roofs, which is further exacerbated by a lack of tree canopy, otherwise known as the heat island effect; *and*

WHEREAS, Investments in expanding our canopy can reduce greenhouse gas emissions and promote overall healthier quality of life for residents; *and*

WHEREAS, As outlined in the 2014-2019 Tree Canopy Assessment, the City determined that while tree canopy loss varies from backyard individual tree removal to the clearing of wooded areas for new construction, more tree canopy was lost on residential land than any other land use type; *and*

WHEREAS, The City of Boston has embarked on creating an Urban Forest Plan to develop an equitable vision for the protection and expansion of the City's tree canopy goals aligned with Climate Ready Boston and Imagine Boston 2030. However, there is no tool to require developers to allocate mitigation money directly to advancing these goals even though new residential buildings are the number one cause of the loss of trees; *and*

WHEREAS, The City of West Palm Beach in Florida has developed a "tree mitigation" fund that developers pay into if they can't meet city requirements for trees or open space on their property, and as of July 2022, there was \$582,000 in the account to pay for the resources necessary to plant thousands of trees; *and*

WHEREAS, Boston utilizes mechanisms like linkage payments to extract private funds related to development to assist with affordable housing and workforce development goals; *and*

WHEREAS, Similar tools should be implemented to advance expanding our tree canopy and assist our goals of becoming a Green New Deal city; *and*

WHEREAS, *These funds have the potential to be part of a wider range of strategies to promote an equitable response to heat resilience by investing directly into environmental justice communities experiencing generations of systemic injustice and inequities; *and*

WHEREAS, With the expansion of PowerCorps Boston, young adults and returning citizens can aid in the acceleration of our work towards meeting Boston's climate goals, including maintaining and growing our urban tree canopy; **NOW, THEREFORE BE IT**

ORDERED: That the appropriate committee of the Boston City Council hold a hearing to discuss a tree mitigation fund for the City of Boston and that the Energy, Environment, and Open Space Cabinet, the Boston Planning and Development Agency, other stakeholders, and the public be invited to testify.

Filed on: January 11, 2023