Action

Based on the City's Ground Cover, Tree Canopy, Heat Island, and Carbon Sequestration Study, identify vulnerable urban tree canopy and street tree sections and develop policies to incentivize, encourage, or require strategic tree planting for heat island mitigation. (LH 4-1)

Introduction

Planting trees to mitigate heat islands is an important Land Use & Housing action for climate resilience. It supports the Climate Action Plan's strategy to mitigate heat island impacts, particularly for vulnerable populations.

Cost

Trees cost around $500 each; planting in areas like downtown could add up to $10,000 in cost per tree for soil cells and infrastructure replacement.

Work Sequence

A. Map the public tree canopy and include tree characteristics and health.
B. Identify where there are gaps or threats.
C. Identify incentives for tree planting offered by the state and federal government, and other organizations.
D. Research what tools other communities in the state are using to mitigate heat islands.
    a. EPA IRA Disadvantaged Communities Map

Consideration

Refer to the "Ground Cover, Tree Canopy, Heat Island, and Carbon Sequestration Study" and UW-Madison student capstone project on heat island mitigation. The City has a Tree Plotter map.

New! City of La Crosse Urban Forest Management Plan (May 2024)

Lead

Parks Dept.

Support

Arbor Day Foundation, Planning Dept., i-Tree, Tree Plotter.

Complementary Actions

I. Increase maintenance to sustain mature tree canopy, decrease tree hazards, and delay tree replacement needs. (LH 4-4)
II. Adopt a tree preservation ordinance that requires obtaining a permit for tree removal on private property (with exceptions for diseased and nuisance trees) and develop a fee structure that does not place a burden on low-income property owners. (GS 1-8)

III. Incentivize/award projects that reduce heat islands, prioritizing areas with the highest heat island coefficients as identified in the City's 2021 Ground Cover, Tree Canopy, and Carbon Sequestration Study. Incentives might include below-market loans, product rebates, grants, and giveaways. Awards can reward exemplary work, highlight innovation, and promote solutions across the public and private sectors. (GS 3-6)

IV. Plant shade trees around municipal buildings to reduce indoor cooling needs, and around parks, playgrounds, and other outdoor spaces to reduce outdoor temperatures. (GS 1-2)