

# Study to examine Louisville's trees

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*Tree canopy study seeks to get detailed information on the status of Louisville' urban forest.*



(Photo: Photo courtesy Michael Hayman )

Louisville, known for its depleted tree cover, will be getting a tree canopy assessment by the end of the year.

City officials announced Wednesday they had awarded \$115,700 to the Davey Resource Group for the study, which help manage the city's trees and set goals for new plantings.

"Knowing where we are lacking tree canopy, down to the street and address level, will help our efforts exponentially in planting trees we need in the places we need them," said Mayor Greg Fischer in a written statement.

That study is in addition to another that began in February and will examine Louisville's issues with urban heat, mapping the hottest areas of the city and assessing the effect of efforts to cool areas with tree planting and cooler building materials.

Research out of Georgia Tech has found that Louisville may be heating up faster than any other metro area, when city temperatures are compared to the surrounding countryside. Brian Stone Jr., an associate professor of city and regional planning at Georgia Tech, has been hired to lead the city's urban-heat study, which was budgeted at \$135,000.

The Courier-Journal in October 2011 reported that Louisville's trees were fighting a losing battle to storms, invasive pests, neglect and age — and the oaks, maples and ash that once towered over parkways, neighborhood streets, parks and backyards were not being replaced.

That same year, a University of Louisville urban planning and environmental law class estimated tree canopy covers only about 27 percent of Jefferson County, while tree cover in other Southern cities can shade 40 percent to 50 percent.

Fischer started a Louisville Metro Tree Advisory Commission in 2012 and set a goal for public and private plantings totaling 10,000 trees, which he said was met last year. He's asked the community to plant another 5,000 trees.

Once the canopy assessment is complete, city officials said Wednesday, the city will set a new tree planting goal to help it achieve overall canopy coverage of 45 percent.

The study will provide tree planting timetables and cost estimates to achieve that goal, while also determining current tree cover and set priorities for tree planting to address urban heat, stormwater management and other concerns, officials said. It will use satellite imagery to track changes in tree canopy dating to 2004, said Erin Thompson, Louisville's urban forester.

Some environmental advocates have praised the tree planting, but have said it might not be keeping up with tree losses, including those cleared for development and other construction.

Thompson said the tree commission has recommended tracking the city's progress with followup assessments every few years.

"The long term goal is how do we preserve and maintain what we have," Thompson said.

Reach reporter James Bruggers at (502) 582-4645 or on Twitter @jbruggers.

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