

*City of Taunton  
Office of the Mayor*



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**O'CONNELL ANNOUNCES \$60K URBAN FORESTRY GRANT**

Taunton, MA...Today Mayor Shaunna O'Connell announced the City of Taunton received a \$60,000 Greening the Gateway Cities Implementation Grant from the Executive Office of Energy & Environmental Affairs (EOEEA) to promote urban forestry.

Increasing urban forestry has been a priority of O'Connell's administration, an initiative of the Parks & Recreation Department and an action identified in the City's Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness Plan. "In the face of climate change and unpredictable New England weather, trees play a vital role in combatting the effects of heat, wind and flooding," said Mayor O'Connell. "My administration is committed to improving the City's forestry and creating a greener, more environmentally resilient urban core. It will be exciting to see the trees being planted knowing they will become part of our future."

The Greening the Gateway Cities Program (GGCP) was created with the goal of increasing the number of trees planted in urban residential areas of the Massachusetts Gateway Cities. Through the GGCP program, trees are planted with a goal of covering 5% of target neighborhoods in new tree canopy cover. Trees are planted by foresters from the Department of Conservation & Recreation (DCR) Urban & Community Forestry Program, in some cases utilizing crews hired from local communities.

The \$60,000 Greening the Gateway Cities Implementation Grant secured by the City of Taunton will fund services and supplies necessary to plant and care for 2,500 trees which are slated to be planted by DCR over the next few years. These trees will be planted within an identified planting zone, covering the City's more urban neighborhoods which tend to have less green space and vegetation.

The grant includes a 500-gallon truck-mounted spray tank and tree planting equipment such as mulch, fertilizer, tree bags and stakes. Funding is also allocated to hire a contractor to construct new tree pits along existing roads and sidewalks. These tools will allow the City's Parks & Recreation Department to adequately maintain the trees being provided by DCR.

"This is an excellent program. Being provided with so many trees and the equipment necessary to maintain them will make a real difference in our urban areas and have a positive impact City-wide. We're excited to get started," said AJ Marshall, Commissioner of the City's Parks & Recreation Department.

O'Connell expressed appreciation for the collaborative partnership fostered between the City of Taunton and the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. "We have seen continuous improvement in many areas of our City as a result of the state's investment in local communities. Our Grant Coordinator, TJ Torres, is doing an excellent job of maximizing opportunities and securing grants for our City. He and AJ Marshall have successfully conceptualized and obtained funding for numerous projects that have an immediate impact on the quality of life of our City residents. We are immensely grateful for their efforts," said O'Connell.

Individuals interested in finding out if their homes or businesses are within the planting zone and qualify for a free tree are encouraged to visit: <https://www.maurbancanopy.org/>.###