



LOUISVILLE, KENTUCKY  
LOUISVILLE METRO BOARD OF HEALTH

GREG FISCHER  
MAYOR

KAREN COST, Ph.D.  
BOARD CHAIRPERSON

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Louisville Metro Council:

The Louisville Metro Board of Health urges Metro Council to support amendments to the Land Development Code designed to increase preservation of our tree canopy. As trees promote physical and mental health in many ways, preserving and expanding our tree canopy is a public health issue.

Green barriers separating air pollution sources such as roadways from places where people live, work, and play substantially reduce citizens' exposure to air pollution. Natural infrastructure also encourages exercise which can help reduce obesity. Studies show that natural infrastructure promotes immune functioning and that spending time in nature reduces stress and increases mental focus. For these reasons, investment in natural infrastructure is investment in public health.

The 2017 Health Equity Report made clear that in some areas of our city, residents can expect to have lifespans over 12 years shorter than residents in other areas. The areas of Louisville which suffer the worst health outcomes tend to be the areas with the least tree canopy. Investing in the preservation and restoration of natural infrastructure of underserved areas of Louisville will produce the biggest improvement in health outcomes and the most return on investment.

The benefits lost by removing mature trees is irreplaceable in our lifetime. The amount of benefit trees provide is proportional to their maturity. The more leaf surface area a tree has, the better it can filter particulate matter from the air, improve air quality and reduce ambient temperatures, reducing the heat island effect. Numerous Louisville Metro policies and plans call for the preservation of trees as a primary response for protecting the public health, resiliency, and livability of our city.

The Louisville Metro Board of Health asks that Metro Council members consider the public health benefits of trees and amend the Land Development Code to preserve Louisville's tree canopy as a public health intervention.

Sincerely,

Karen M. Cost, PhD  
Chair, Louisville Board of Health