

# Memorandum



CITY OF DALLAS

DATE April 19, 2019

TO Honorable Members of the Mobility Solutions, Infrastructure and Sustainability Committee

SUBJECT **Great Trinity Forest Resolution**

The City of Dallas, its partners at the US Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) and other nonprofit entities have been implementing various projects and maintenance activities in the Great Trinity Forest since the mid-1990s. As part of these efforts, a number of planning documents have been completed, including but not limited to, the Great Trinity Forest Master Plan, Dallas Floodway Extension Record of Decision, Balanced Vision Plan, Great Trinity Forest Management Plan, City-wide Trail Master Plan and the Community Wildfire Plan. All of these planning documents have carefully considered all plans available and have built upon the previous documents to aid in providing opportunities to protect and open our natural resources for use while providing ongoing increased public safety to the residents within the areas adjacent to the Great Trinity Forest through flood risk management and wildfire planning and prevention activities.

Local funding through various bond programs, and federal funding through the USACE have been allocated and a number of projects have been implemented. The City currently has ownership of approximately 4,300 acres of the 6,000-acre footprint of the Great Trinity Forest. As part of requests expressed by members of the City Council, staff has been working to develop a resolution that would re-affirm the support of the Great Trinity Forest to provide flood risk management, ecosystem restoration, recreational opportunities and preservation of the Great Trinity Forest. The attached resolution for City Council consideration on May 8, 2019 outlines the history of the Great Trinity Forest planning efforts, some of the projects that have been implemented, and next steps that will be brought forward to protect and enhance the Great Trinity Forest.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Majed Al-Ghafry'.

Majed Al-Ghafry, P.E.  
Assistant City Manager

c: Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council  
T.C. Broadnax, City Manager  
Chris Caso, City Attorney (Interim)  
Billierae Johnson, City Secretary  
Preston Robinson, Administrative Judge  
Kimberly Bizzor Tolbert, Chief of Staff to the City Manager  
Jon Fortune, Assistant City Manager

Joey Zapata, Assistant City Manager  
Nadia Chandler Hardy, Assistant City Manager and Chief Resilience Officer  
Michael Mendoza, Chief of Economic Development and Neighborhood Services  
M. Elizabeth Reich, Chief Financial Officer  
Laila Alequresh, Chief Innovation Officer  
Directors and Assistant Directors

**STRATEGIC PRIORITY:** Mobility Solutions, Infrastructure, and Sustainability  
**AGENDA DATE:** May 8, 2019  
**COUNCIL DISTRICT(S):** All  
**DEPARTMENT:** Water Utilities Department  
**EXECUTIVE:** Majed Al-Ghafry

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## **SUBJECT**

Authorize a resolution reaffirming the protection of the Great Trinity Forest and upholding the multi-purposes of the Great Trinity Forest as outlined in local, state and federally approved plans including flood risk management, ecosystem restoration, and recreational enhancements and to direct the City Manager to pursue measures to implement the action plans to protect the Great Trinity Forest through local, state and federal partners and resources - Financing: No cost consideration to the City

## **BACKGROUND**

The City of Dallas, in partnership with state and federal regulatory agencies, have spent several decades working on the development of a comprehensive plan for the Great Trinity Forest that addresses flood risk management, ecosystem restoration and recreational enhancements. Various plans have included approximately 6,000 acres of floodplain land along the Trinity River geographically located at approximately the Dallas Area Rapid Transit Bridge connecting the east and west sides of the floodplain downstream of the Corinth Street Bridge, following the natural boundaries near State Highway 310 continuing through Great Trinity Forest Way and southwesterly to the McCommas Landfill, the northeastern boundary of Parkdale Lake to Scyene Road through William Blair Park and southeasterly to Dowdy Ferry Road and Interstate Highway 20.

These planning efforts were authorized as part of the Dallas Floodway Extension which is integral to flood risk management efforts in Dallas. The federal authorization and inclusion of the area as part of the federal system was first initiated in the 1960s and was most recently authorized as part of the Record of Decision and subsequent actions as the Dallas Floodway Extension. Furthermore, the Dallas City Council affirmed its support of these efforts through the Balanced Vision Plan in 2003, and as amended in 2004 (unrelated to this work). Additionally, the City has developed an extensive Great Trinity Forest Management Plan that serves as a master plan, incorporating the federal and local requirements into one document and outlining actions that may occur in the Great Trinity Forest. Under the various plans that have been prepared and consistent with the federal regulations, the Great Trinity Forest serves to:

- Reduce flood damages, provide better health and safety measures, reduce emergency services, reduce potential loss of life due to high velocity flows, reduce isolations due to flood waters, reducing overtopping of bridges and roads along the Trinity River, and reducing the loss of jobs and/or wages caused by flooding
- Preserve and protect existing environmental and aesthetically pleasing areas and maintaining, as much as possible, the existing vegetation and wildlife habitat
- Preserve and protect historically and culturally significant areas
- Implement maintenance regimes for the myriad of assets included within the Great Trinity Forest

The City and its partners such as United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) and various nonprofit entities have spent over \$200,000,000.00 to date to address items such as land acquisition, planning, design and construction of the Upper and Lower Chains of Wetlands, South Central Park Extension, Great Trinity Forest Southern Gateway and Horse Trails, Great Trinity Forest Trails, Texas Horse Park, Cedar Crest Gateway, Trinity River Audubon Center, Great Trinity Way safety improvements and various other connections for residents and businesses. Recently, the USACE received over \$50,000,000.00 in new funding to complete the Lamar Levee connecting the East Levee to the Rochester Levee; and the Circuit Trail Conservancy has secured private funds to match the City's 2017 Bond Funds for the planned trail system connecting the AT&T Trail to Scyene Road.

The City has acquired approximately 4,300 acres of the 6,000 acres to date. At this time, the City desires to move forward to the next phase which will further define and protect the Great Trinity Forest and decades of work by local, state and federal stakeholders. This item directs the City Manager to pursue measures to implement the action plans to protect the Great Trinity Forest through local, state and federal partners and resources. Some of these actions include a comprehensive survey of the Great Trinity Forest and, continue with acquisition, preservation and maintenance such that Dallas residents and visitors may further interact and experience the diverse ecosystems within the Great Trinity Forest.

#### **PRIOR ACTION/REVIEW (COUNCIL, BOARDS, COMMISSIONS)**

The Quality of Life, Arts, and Culture and Mobility Solutions, Infrastructure, and Sustainability Committees were briefed by memorandum regarding this matter on April 22, 2019.

#### **MAP**

Attached

May 8, 2019

**WHEREAS**, the Great Trinity Forest is approximately 6000 acres of floodplain land along the Trinity River; and

**WHEREAS**, the Great Trinity Forest is the largest bottomland urban hardwood forest with a natural river channel in the United States; and

**WHEREAS**, the Great Trinity Forest provides flood risk management through the natural and built features associated with conveyance of upstream and downstream river flows; and

**WHEREAS**, the Great Trinity Forest provides significant recreation opportunities for Dallas residents and visitors, and habitat for native Texas wildlife and plants; and

**WHEREAS**, the Great Trinity Forest helps improve water quality, clean air, control runoff and mitigate impacts of climate change; and

**WHEREAS**, during the last several decades, local, state, and federal agencies have partnered with residents and businesses to establish a coordinated approach to protecting and preserving the ecosystem and flood risk management benefits of the Great Trinity Forest through:

- 1962, the United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) completed a Comprehensive Survey Report on the Trinity River and Tributaries, Texas; and
- November 1968 the Texas Water Development Board created the Texas Water Plan; and
- 1974, the USACE completed the Trinity River Project, Phase I General Design Memorandum; and
- 1981, Trinity River Project, Texas, Habitat Mitigation Report; and
- 1989, USACE report on flooding in the Dallas Floodway; and
- 1999, Dallas Floodway Extension Project GRR/EIS goal objectives; and

**WHEREAS**, the boundaries of the Great Trinity Forest are federally regulated under the Dallas Floodway Extension Project beginning at approximately the Dallas Area Rapid Transit Bridge connecting the East and West sides of the floodplain downstream of the Corinth Street Bridge, following the natural boundaries near State Highway 310 continuing through Great Trinity Forest Way and southwesterly to the McCommas Landfill, the northeastern boundary of Parkdale Lake to Scyene Road through William Blair Park and southeasterly to Dowdy Ferry and Interstate Highway 20; and

**WHEREAS**, the 1997 Great Trinity Forest Master Plan, prepared by the Texas Park and Wildlife, gave guidance on long-term development and goals, such as reduction of flooding hazards, preservation of natural resources, creation of new recreation opportunities, enhancement of the southern sector and underserved areas, and fostering improvements in adjacent communities; and

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**WHEREAS**, the 1998, 2006, and 2012 Bond Programs authorized funding to implement flood risk management activities in the Dallas Floodway Extension Project, as well as recreational improvements such as the South Central Park Extension, Great Trinity Forest Southern Gateway & Horse Trails, Great Trinity Forest Trails, Texas Horse Park, Cedar Crest Gateway, Trinity River Audubon Center, Great Trinity Way safety improvements and various other connections for residents and businesses; and

**WHEREAS**, on December 8, 2003, the City Council adopted the Balanced Vision Plan (the "BVP"), by Resolution No. 03-3391, and further adopted refinements on April 14, 2004, by Resolution No. 04-1252 that was the guiding principle for recreation, flood control, and environmental improvements for the Trinity Corridor, including the Great Trinity Forest; and

**WHEREAS**, in 2008 the City Council adopted the Great Trinity Forest Management Plan, which has since been used to guide implementation of vegetation restoration and recreation projects; and

**WHEREAS**, the City of Dallas has been proactively acquiring properties contained in the floodplain in excess of two decades in accordance with regulatory directives, and currently owns approximately 4,300 acres of the Great Trinity Forest; and

**WHEREAS**, the Great Trinity Forest provides ever increasing citizen and visitor outdoor experiences through hiking, biking, equestrian, birdwatching, canoeing, kayaking, and other recreational opportunities; and

**WHEREAS**, the Great Trinity Forest provides beneficial environmental and socially equitable benefits to the communities in and around the Great Trinity Forest and city proper; and

**WHEREAS**, City of Dallas is committed to protecting and preserving the land within the Great Trinity Forest for posterity; and

**WHEREAS**, the Dallas City Council desires to develop an action plan for the preservation of the Great Trinity Forest and its ecosystem.

**Now, Therefore,**

**BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF DALLAS:**

**SECTION 1.** That the City of Dallas acknowledges and reaffirms the federal obligations for the Great Trinity Forest which include but are not limited to:

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**SECTION 1.** (continued)

- Reducing flood damages, providing better health and safety measures, reducing emergency services, reduce potential loss of life due to high velocity flows, reducing isolations due to flood waters, reducing overtopping of bridges and roads
- along the Trinity River, and reducing the loss of jobs and/or wages caused by flooding
- Preserving and protecting existing environmental and aesthetically pleasing areas and maintaining, as much as possible, the existing vegetation and wildlife habitat;
- Preserving and protecting historically and culturally significant areas
- Implementing maintenance regimes for the myriad of assets included within the Great Trinity Forest

**SECTION 2.** That the Dallas City Council reaffirms its support to protect and uphold the multi-purposes of the Great Trinity Forest as outlined in local, state and federally approved plans including flood risk management, ecosystem restoration, and recreational enhancements.

**SECTION 3.** That the Dallas City Council directs the City Manager to undertake a comprehensive survey of the Great Trinity Forest and, continue with acquisition, preservation and maintenance such that the residents and visitors of Dallas may further interact and experience the diverse ecosystems within the Great Trinity Forest.

**SECTION 4.** That the City Council directs the City Manager to pursue measures to implement the action plans to protect the Great Trinity Forest through local, state and federal partners and resources.

**SECTION 5.** That this resolution shall take effect immediately from and after its passage in accordance with the provisions of the Charter of the City of Dallas, and it is accordingly so resolved.

# Great Trinity Forest

