

**Resolution of Support:
Natural Features Working Group of the Environmental Commission
SEAS Proposal**

Whereas, the City's adopted Natural Features Master Plan (2004) called for more thorough inventory of the City's Natural Features, especially of Woodlands;

Whereas our current Woodlands information cannot distinguish a Native Forest Fragment from other Woodlands, including invasive shrub thickets, when much more detailed information is vital to have in Geographical Information System (GIS) format;

Whereas, that Master Plan also called for an outreach program to work with people in neighborhoods to teach them about their local landscapes, natural features, water resources and conservation -- with an eye to encouraging them to become better, more sustainable stewards of those landscapes;

Whereas, a Council requested review of the status of the "Natural Features Ordinance" (2016) resulted in a set of recommendations that also called for significant strides in knowledge of our natural features, particularly of forests across the City, and it called for an outreach program to help people know how to develop more sustainable landscapes, conserve water on the land, etc.;

Whereas, it has become increasingly clear that many natural ecosystems and the diversity of species in them are facing an alarming possibility of collapse and extinction, world-wide and in Michigan;

Whereas it is known that older trees (especially Oaks, which are highly represented in Ann Arbor's Native Forest Fragments) are outstanding at sequestering carbon (thousands of pounds a year, per tree), and they are known to support over 400 species of fauna, including important pollinators;

Whereas it would cost many tens of thousands of dollars to hire consultants to accomplish these efforts for the City, when dollars may be hard to come by in the near term for such purposes;

Whereas the proposed project could produce far more useful results than any consultant could provide and would include enough field work to gain good confidence in the data;

Whereas, this effort could lead to a strong a long-term positive impact for the City's work to mitigate climate change, to reduce loss of biodiversity, and to increase the resiliency of natural systems across the City; and

Whereas most of the work in this project with University of Michigan School of Environment and Sustainability (SEAS) students would be led by non-City employees; and

Whereas, the City Council has unanimously supported this undertaking.

Therefore be it resolved that the Environmental Commission (EC) of the City of Ann Arbor heartily supports the proposal of its Natural Features Working Group (NFWG) to enlist the help of Master's students at the University of Michigan, and requests that the proposal to be transmitted to SEAS before the program's deadline October 26, 2020; and

Be it resolved, the EC looks forward to working with particular City staff in gaining the modest support needed including, but not limited to: Modest financial assistance for the students (to be determined); help in bringing data collected and interpreted into the City's GIS system and facilitating students connections to the City's GIS infrastructure in a way that functions well; and guidance in the development of outreach materials for work in the neighborhoods.