

Item Title: Resolution Supporting Increased Use of Native Plants on Wake County Government Projects

Specific Action Requested:

That the Board of Commissioners approves a Resolution endorsing the increased use of Native Plants for Wake County Government projects.

Item Summary:

Purpose: The Board of Commissioners must approve any Resolution that impacts Wake County operations.

Background: The rapid growth experienced by the Triangle brings with it numerous development concerns. One concern, often overlooked, is the loss of the natural landscape in exchange for non-native varieties of plants in the landscape. Native plants celebrate and help restore natural diversity, create a natural sense of place, provide food and shelter for wildlife and encourage stewardship of the land among other benefits. The goal is to increase the use of native plants on Wake County government projects.

This initiative was first introduced in the Wake County Open Space and Parks Advisory Committee (OSAPAC). OSAPAC recommended moving the initiative through the Growth, Land Use and Environment (GLUE) committee. After update presentations, the GLUE committee recommended moving this initiative forward to the Board of Commissioners Work Session on October 8 for further consideration.

Board Goal: This action is related to the Growth & Sustainability Board Goal and its Objective GS2 to promote sustainability efforts throughout the county.

Fiscal Impact: There is no fiscal impact to the County associated with this initiative.

Additional Information:

As Wake County staff worked toward this goal, a broad spectrum of professionals and organizations were contacted to discuss the opportunities to move this initiative forward. These professionals and organizations included, the NC Botanical Gardens, Landscape Architects, Wake County Planning, NC Native Plant Society, Wake County GSA, landscape nurseries, and landscape contractors. The outcome of these discussions helped frame the opportunities on which to focus and to have an impact. The areas of focus include the Wake County Unified Development Ordinance (UDO) and the Wake County Design Guidelines and Standards for Wake County capital projects.

Since 2006, the UDO has prohibited non-native or invasive plant species in buffer yards for projects submitted in Wake County's jurisdiction. This requirement does not impact the existing yards of private citizens. However, the UDO can be updated to provide more current references for non-native invasive species. The Wake County Design Guidelines and Standards for Wake County Government projects can also be revised to include language for minimum percentages of native plants and educational signage to be used on Wake County Government projects.

Finally, the Resolution states that the Wake County Board of Commissioners has undertaken an initiative to review and revise the Wake County Unified Development Ordinance and the Wake County Design Guidelines and Standards ensuring that Wake County Government projects utilize Native Plants to the greatest extent possible, in an effort to protect our natural resources and protect and preserve the health, safety and welfare of Wake County residents.

Attachments:

1. Presentation
2. Resolution
3. Presentation from October 8 Work Session