



**CITY OF SANTA BARBARA**  
**PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION REPORT**

**AGENDA DATE:** September 26, 2012  
**TO:** Parks and Recreation Commission  
**FROM:** Administration Division, Parks and Recreation Department  
**SUBJECT:** Urban Forest Management Plan Project

**RECOMMENDATION:** That the Commission receive a report on the Urban Forest Management Plan project and that the Chair select two members of the Commission to participate in the Urban Forest Management Plan Technical Advisory Committee.

**DISCUSSION:**

The development of an urban forest management plan (UFMP) is a key Parks and Recreation Department project for Fiscal Years 2013 and 2014. The primary objective of the UFMP is to provide a long-term guide for the preservation and enhancement of Santa Barbara's urban forest. The scope of work includes preparation of a baseline tree canopy assessment and policy options analysis, extensive public outreach through community meetings, City TV, web resources, and other public information methods, public discussion during meetings of the Parks and Recreation Commission, Street Tree Advisory Committee, and other Boards and Commissions, and final action by the City Council. The project is funded in part by a grant from the California Department of Forestry and Fire.

Need for an Urban Forest Management Plan

Although the preservation of trees is outlined in the Santa Barbara Municipal Code (15.20 and 15.24), Santa Barbara General Plan (2011), and the Street Tree Master Plan (1977), the City has never developed a comprehensive urban forest management plan. A comprehensive urban forest management plan is needed for a number of reasons. Existing guidance in the Street Tree Master Plan is limited to street trees, and the focus of the plan is to maintain tree diversity. The STMP does not address long-term management objectives including canopy cover, infrastructure constraints, environmental benefits, land use, aesthetics, native habitats, and community vitality that are becoming increasingly important as the urban forest ages, urban development changes streetscapes, and species diversity declines. The STMP also does not address trees in other city public spaces and does not provide guidance for the integration of private land and public land uses to benefit the urban forest.

### Urban Forest Management Plan Objectives

Recent updates to the City's tree inventory (2007) and tree preservation policies (2009), as well as an efficient tree planting and maintenance program provide a solid base from which to develop the UFMP. During an initial effort by the Department in 2010, a number of key objectives were identified for consideration in the development of a long-term management plan. These objectives are categorized under Tree Resources, Management, and Community Outreach. They include: 1) Maintain trees to promote safety, health, and longevity, 2) Maximize canopy cover and optimize age and species diversity, 3) Maximize the ecological and environmental benefits of the urban forest, 4) Improve coordination and cooperation of people and organizations that influence the urban forest, 5) Model good stewardship, 6) Expand public and private partnerships, and 7) Enhance public awareness of the urban forest as a community resource. These objectives, as well as others, will be explored during the UFMP Project.

### Baseline Tree Canopy Assessment and Policy Options Report

The baseline tree canopy assessment will enable the City to establish existing canopy cover and provide the basis from which to develop canopy cover goals for the UFMP. Currently underway, the assessment uses satellite imagery to create Geographic Information Systems (GIS) tree canopy data layers that can be integrated with the City's existing mapping system. Data layers will be organized by land use type (residential, commercial, park/open space, etc) and ownership (private/public).

The policy options analysis will provide an overview of the purpose and objectives of an UFMP, assess the type and relevance of plans prepared by other communities, identify research needs, and outline the proposed framework, approach to plan development, and methods for implementation. This document will serve as the framework for defining and developing the UFMP.

Both the baseline tree canopy assessment and the policy options report are being drafted by Parks and Recreation staff and will be complete in late October.

### Technical Advisory Group

The Department is forming an advisory group to work with staff during key stages of plan development. The role of the advisory group is to assist staff in the development of plan objectives, review draft documents, and attend public and community meetings. The TAC will function as an informal working group comprised of individuals that bring arboricultural, horticultural, landscape management, and planning/policy expertise to the project. The TAC will be comprised of two Parks and Recreation Commissioners, two Street Tree Advisory Committee members, one Planning Commissioner, and one

representative from the Santa Barbara Botanic Garden, Santa Barbara Beautiful, Southern California Edison, and a tree professional/community member. The TAC will likely meet up to six times with a time commitment of five hours per meeting, and participants will be asked to attend both community meetings and public meetings. Although a schedule has not been developed, meetings may need to be held during regular work hours.

### Community and Public Meetings

The project includes three community meetings. Community meetings will be a key element of project implementation. Santa Barbara has a long history of civic engagement and dedication to community involvement in the development of policy and program initiatives. Community meetings will be held at three stages of UFMP development: 1) Project Initiation, 2) Draft Plan Review and 3) Final Plan/Implementation. The purpose of the meetings will be to engage a broad cross section of the community in the discussion of UFMP goals, objectives and implementation measures.

The Parks and Recreation Commission will review the draft and final UFMP, and make recommendations to the City Council. Other Boards, Committees, and Commissions that will review the UFMP include the Street Tree Advisory Committee, Architectural Board of Review, Historic Landmarks Commission, and Planning Commission. The Commission will be notified of all community meetings and any other public discussion of the project.

### Public Outreach

Public outreach methods include the preparation of printed materials, web resources, City TV video segments, press releases, print advertising, and electronic newsletters. The focus of the outreach efforts will be to: 1) disseminate information about the project objectives and encourage public participation, and 2) educate community members about the UFMP once adopted. Outreach efforts will be ongoing throughout the project and will continue after project completion.

### Project Timeline and Budget

The project has a 21-month timeline, beginning in July 2012 and ending in March 2014. The timeline is driven by the grant agreement that the City has with Cal Fire. As a result, the majority of the work to complete the project will occur in 2013. The project budget of \$120,342 includes a grant of \$71,092 from Cal Fire.

**SUBMITTED BY:** Jill E. Zachary, Assistant Parks and Recreation Director

**APPROVED BY:** Nancy L. Rapp, Parks and Recreation Director