



CITY OF SANTA BARBARA

PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION REPORT

AGENDA DATE: March 27, 2013

TO: Parks and Recreation Commission

FROM: Administration Division, Parks and Recreation Department

SUBJECT: Urban Forest Management Plan Project

RECOMMENDATION: That the Commission:

- A. Receive a status report on the Urban Forest Management Plan project; and
- B. Review and provide comments on the Urban Forest Key Issues and Draft Objectives.

DISCUSSION:

Background

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 plan 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.

Project Status

Since the project began in July 2012, the Department completed and advanced a number of project tasks. These include formation of the Technical Advisory Committee, completion of the citywide tree canopy assessment, case studies of other urban forest management plans, preparation of the baseline analysis and background documents, completion of a community tree information survey, and preparation of a key issues document and preliminary draft objectives. The Technical Advisory Committee has met four times, and two community meetings were held in January 2013. The Department is

also coordinating with the Community Development, Public Works, and Fire Departments throughout the project.

Now that the project is well underway, the Department is sharing results to date with City boards and commissions, and soliciting input on the key issues and preliminary draft objectives. During the month of April, the project will also be presented to the Street Tree Advisory Committee, Planning Commission, Architectural Board of Review, Historic Landmarks Commission, and the Single Family Design Review Board.

Tree Canopy Assessment

The tree canopy assessment was completed by digital mapping individual and continuous canopy throughout the City. The mapping process revealed that there are 2,787 acres of canopy throughout the City. This area, divided by the total city area of 10,986 acres, calculated the overall citywide canopy cover at 25.4%. This area excludes unincorporated areas, the airport, and the area of the 101 Freeway that intersects within the City limits. As shown in the table below, the assessment data was used to determine canopy cover for residential areas, parks and open space, and other major land uses.

Citywide Canopy Cover and Tree Population

Location (2011 General Plan Zones)	Canopy Area (Acres)	Percent Canopy by Location	Percent Canopy of entire city	Estimated Tree Population
Entire City	2,787	25.4%	--	322,290
Residential Areas	2,094	27.8%	80.6%	259,719
Parks and Open Spaces*	322	23.3%	11.6%	36,727
Commercial/Civic	140	20.4%	4.9%	16,077
Office Areas	20	11.4%	0.7%	2,320
Industrial	10	6.9%	0.4%	1,148
Public Schools	55	18.7%	2.0%	6,299

*Parks and Open Space areas in the 2011 General Plan include The Montecito Country Club, Sheffield Reservoir, Laurel Canyon Reservoir, and the Santa Barbara Municipal Golf Course.

In an effort to correlate canopy cover with the number of actual trees within the City, staff also developed tree population estimates. The estimates were developed using the average canopy of the 16 most common species found throughout Santa Barbara. The species represent approximately 55% of the total street tree species. This population sample was assumed to accurately encompass a large enough population of trees to apply to the rest of the City's known canopy area. In addition, the canopy

area of these trees was selected because they are the only canopies mapped over known GPS coordinates of street trees in the Arbor Access Database.

Community Meetings

Two community meetings were held in January. The meetings were attended by a total of 51 residents, including six City staff. The meeting agenda included a presentation of the project objectives and discussion of community concerns and interests about trees. Maintenance of City-owned trees was the issue most important to residents and was their number one recommended City priority. Comments were primarily geared at increasing street tree maintenance and reduced sidewalk conflicts, although others commented on maintenance by Southern California Edison and a lack of street tree debris maintenance by residents. Additional comments according to the following topics, included:

- *Tree type and size:* Tree type and size comments included the need for larger canopy street trees to shade paved surfaces. In addition, while some favored the use of native trees, others enjoy the look of a diverse mix of species and flowering trees along City streets. One commenter requested continuity of tree species by block.
- *Outreach and education:* Outreach and education is important to the public and comments included: partnerships with schools, County, MarBorg, and general tree value and care information for the public.
- *Resident contribution:* When asked what residents can do for the health of the urban forest, meeting participants suggested learning the City's regulations, planting trees, care for street trees, and reporting problems to authorities.
- *Residents want more Information:* Residents at the meeting would like to know more about: Public access to STMP database, balancing high fire with canopy, outreach efforts such as walking tours and disease and pest awareness, and topping trees for views.

Community Tree Survey

The community tree survey was conducted between January 24 and February 21, 2013. The purpose of the survey was to learn more about the public concerns surrounding trees, gather perspectives of City tree priorities, and gauge familiarity with tree preservation ordinances. The survey also sought to understand what type of information the public would like to learn more about. The survey was developed for distribution at the community meetings in January. The online survey tool, Survey

Monkey, was subsequently used to broaden survey responses. A link to the online survey was emailed to a select group of residents including: City of Santa Barbara e-subscribers, subscribers to the City's weekly newsletter, and members of the online community forum Nextdoor.com. Additionally, the survey was placed on the Forestry webpage. The survey results are included in Attachment 1. Key findings include:

- *Most important tree-related issues:* Aesthetics and appearance, pruning and maintenance, tree health, tree protection, and historic and specimen species.
- *Top City priorities:* Tree health and aesthetics, public safety, tree planting, tree maintenance, and tree protection.
- *Resident contribution to the urban forest:* Maintaining and planting trees on private property, reporting problems, and understanding City policies and practices.
- *Contact with the City about trees:* 51% reported having contacted the City and 48% had not.
- *Familiarity with tree preservation policies:* 44% reported being unfamiliar, 47% reported being somewhat familiar, and 9% reported being very familiar.

Vision and Mission

To guide the development of the urban forest management plan, the Technical Advisory Committee and staff also developed the following vision and mission statement.

Vision: Santa Barbara's urban forest is healthy and diverse, and contributes to the community's economic, environmental, and aesthetic vitality. It is valued and cared for by the City and its citizens, and reflects our horticultural heritage.

Mission: Preserve, protect and enhance our trees, promote the benefits of trees, and foster a healthy and diverse urban forest.

Urban Forest Key Issues

In order to begin developing a potential framework for the urban forest management plan, staff prepared the attached key issues document. Developed with input from City staff, the Technical Advisory Committee, public input at the community meetings, and survey results, the key issues address management of public trees and private trees,

City organizational and policy considerations, and community education and outreach needs. The key issues document is included as Attachment 2.

Draft Plan Objectives

Preliminary draft objectives, included as Attachment 3, are organized under four major categories: 1) Tree Resource Management, 2) City Organization, 3) Policy and Planning, and 4) Community Involvement. These objectives assist in the development of key actions; the steps the City and community will take over the next 30-50 years, to preserve and enhance Santa Barbara's urban forest.

Next Steps

Development of the UFMP is progressing well. Significant progress has been made with establishing baseline information, identifying key issues, and initial public outreach. After gathering comments from boards and commissions, developing plan goals, objectives, and key actions are important next steps of the project. Additional public outreach is tentatively scheduled for June, with follow-up meetings with boards and commissions during the summer. The City Council will also be briefed on the project status in July.

ATTACHMENTS: 1. Community Tree Survey Results
2. Draft Key Issues
3. Draft Preliminary Objectives

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