

City of Palo Alto Public Works Department Urban Forestry Section FY 2018-2019 Accomplishment Report

The Urban Forestry Program strives to improve people's lives through wise management of a healthy, vibrant, and safe urban forest. Notable accomplishments of this past fiscal year are described in the following pages.



CITY OF
**PALO
ALTO**



TREE CITY USA®



TREE LINE USA.



**THE MISSION
OF THE
URBAN
FORESTRY
SECTION IS
TO CONNECT
PEOPLE TO
TREES**

Urban Forest Master Plan

The Urban Forest Master Plan second edition was adopted by City Council in March 2019.

Implementation of the first edition was underway and is now going to be augmented with new programs. Major goals include improving species composition and distribution in conjunction with increasing overall

canopy coverage throughout Palo Alto.

Some programs seek to influence the vitality of the urban forest on private property, therefore funding will have to be sought for implementation from sources which balance the role of government with goals of the community. Simultaneously new regulation will need

to be developed. Synergy will be needed between policy, partnerships, authority, outreach, investment, education, advocacy, and volunteerism. Leaders and champions are needed during this time of change, challenge, and opportunity. Innovation will be vital.

Success indicators

⇒ The Blue Trees art exhibit (pictured at right) was installed in King Plaza of Palo Alto City Hall thus drawing attention to deforestation worldwide.

⇒ A Landscape Architect position was hired. Catherine Mondkar started her career with the City of Palo Alto in November 2018. Catherine holds a Master in Landscape Architecture degree and has previous experience with the New York City Urban Forestry Program.

⇒ Revisions to Title 8 of Palo Alto Municipal Code were reviewed by the Planning and Transportation Commission and prepared for City Council. Some proposed requirements, such as protecting trees that are part of a carbon offset project, will position the City of Palo Alto as a national leader.

⇒ The Board of Directors for the Arbor Day Foundation held a meeting in Palo Alto. They were inspired during a tour with presentations from staff of the City of Palo Alto, Canopy, VMWare, and Stanford



Inside highlights:

Urban Forest Master Plan	1
Outreach and Recognition	2
Replenishment	2
Risk Management and Emergency Response	3
Collaboration	3
Staff Development	3
Capacity Building	4

Wow Facts!

- \$375,000 + leveraged funding
- 10,000 + customer requests satisfied
- 12,861 work orders processed
- 16,649 trees pruned (public + utility)
- 265 planning application reviews

Customer Service

On average more than 900 customer requests per month are addressed about trees

Planning applications decreased 30% over the prior year, though are 31% higher than three years ago.



Proposed Cal Ave. garage

Professional decisions are frequently needed. Certified arborists on staff performed 1167 inspections on public trees.

Demand requests were answered by responding to more than 900 inquiries monthly which generated 12,861 work orders during the year

Development Services oversight included 345 tree protection fencing inspections and 28 re-inspections. Review and

comment was provided for 265 planning applications. 163 building permits were reviewed for tree protection and issued. 59 permits were issued for removal or work on protected or regulated trees.

Notable projects such as Castilleja School improvements, wireless installations, and Cal Train electrification will continue to be closely monitored in the future.

Capital Improvement Program (CIP) and other City of Palo Alto projects were serviced by responsive consulting and tree protection treatments. Projects of note include a new public safety building, Adobe Pedestrian Bridge, Charleston-Arastradero Road improvements, the Junior Museum and Zoo, and two public parking structures.

Outreach and Recognition

Media coverage was garnered in the Palo Alto daily and weekly. The blue trees art installation garnered attention with the tree pruning cycle and budgets also generating interest. Positive messaging was injected about the benefits of trees as well as the need for care.

Outreach was jointly conducted with Palo Alto libraries, the Art Center, Canopy, the Santa Clara

Valley Water District, the Santa Clara County Firesafe Council and other partners.

Awards from the Arbor Day Foundation recognized the City of Palo Alto as a Tree City USA for the 31st year. In addition Palo Alto was again recognized as a Tree Line USA utility and Stanford University recognized as a Tree Campus USA.

The Palo Alto Urban Forestry Program maintained accreditation through the Society of Municipal Arborists.

Awareness of the importance of urban forestry was highlighted by Mayor Eric Filseth at the annual Mayor's tree planting event held at the Mitchell Park.

Efforts by the Urban Forestry Section in conjunction with Canopy resulted in planting 403 new trees! 27% are native species

Replenishment

Tree Planting by staff installed 242 new trees into individual vacant planter sites within the right-of-way or parks. Native species (mostly oaks) represent 27% of the total. Canopy planted an additional 161 trees in South Palo Alto. The first partnership effort of the season with Canopy resulted in planting 32 trees in three South Palo Alto

neighborhoods. The Mayor's Tree Planting, Arbor Day, and Arbor Week events highlighted the importance of replenishing the urban forest as well as caring for it.

Arbor Day activities started at Hoover Park and continued to plant 32 trees for South Palo Alto residents. Messaging focused on tree planting,

care and appreciation.

Young tree survey collected data on 1,438 trees planted within the past 5 years. Banners, post cards, and articles in the Canopy e-news letter promoted proper watering and care practices.



Arbor Day Foundation visit



Planting in South Palo Alto

Risk Management and Emergency Response

Emergency response preparation and proactive maintenance resulted in a limited number of limb pick-ups to the third lowest recorded in the past 10 years.

Utility vegetation management continues to be an important service. During the year 8,891 trees were cleared away from power lines thus protecting public safety and preventing outages. This is the greatest number in the last 10 years.

In fact only 4 outages were caused by trees in the current fiscal year. The pruning production rate exceeded the target thus allowing crews to catch up on deferred work from the year prior. 19 trees were removed under the Right Tree, Right Place Program to allow a utility compatible species to be planted instead. Also significant is the fifth award from the Arbor Day Foundation for designation as a Tree Line USA

Utility recognizing the joint efforts between departments.

Tree Removals are always a difficult decision that signals the last available action to protect public safety or essential infrastructure. 272 public tree removals prevented undesirable outcomes.

Code enforcement investigations were completed for 3 cases.



The Right Tree Right Place Program authorized 19 replacements of inappropriate trees under power lines

Collaboration

Sustainability is a major topic of interest for the City. Urban Forestry staff lead development of the Sustainability Implementation Plan for the natural environment chapter while also proposing collaborative solutions to link planned actions.

Wood Utilization is a topic of increasing interest. Analysis of long-lasting products/uses for wood debris will improve

carbon storage and reduce waste. One “logs to lumber” project resulted in rescuing 13,800 pounds of Redwood.

The City of Palo Alto Green Infrastructure Plan is being created. Urban Forestry Section staff contributed technical expertise during stakeholder meetings, commented on draft content, identified potential pro-

jects, and networked with regulators.

The Foothills Fire Management Plan was advanced by the inter-departmental team. The contract with the SCC Firesafe Council was implemented following the annual work plan resulting in safe evacuation routes and outreach to residents among completed actions.



More than 6 tons of Redwood logs ready to be converted to lumber. Lumber from these logs may be used in the new Public Safety Building or other facility.

Staff Development

Strategic plan revision identified training and practice opportunities to advance skills, build capacity, and improve responsiveness. Internal, local, and low cost options have been used. Tree Section staff have benefitted from training with webinars, local professional seminars about safety, tree climbing and rigging, the Tree Failure

data base seminar in Woodside, as well as Arbor Fest West and the Partners in Community Forestry conference.

Staff development is one essential component of increasing capacity to deliver programs and services in the future, therefore will be integrated into many elements of implementing the Urban

Forest Master Plan. Joe Rapanut obtained status as a qualified tree risk assessor. Other staff members initiated study of materials for obtaining Certified Tree Worker or Certified Arborist status.

Trees Work

The Urban Forestry Program strives to be an innovative leader in Municipal Forestry. The organizational structure which is comprehensive and unified provides a strong base to integrate practices into many aspects of both planning and operations of multiple departments. Primary service responsibilities include Public Works, Community Services including Parks, Development, Planning, Utilities, and Sustainability. The goal for the future is to continuously improve, leading the profession of ecosystem stewardship as an internationally recognized model.

Capacity Building

Partnerships were enhanced with Cal Fire and improved with professional organizations including the Arbor Day Foundation. Locally, Canopy contributed \$342,172.51 of matching support including 2,870 hours of volunteer service with notable accomplishments such as launching the great oak count, caring for recently planted trees by surveying the health of almost 1,000 recent plantings, and hosting 22 planting or tree-care service days. The South Palo Alto tree planting initiative added 161 new trees to neighborhoods where they are needed most.

Additionally, Canopy provided great outreach to the community as evidenced by 72 educational events attended by 1,168 youth and adults, 113 tree inquiries answered, 12 issues of the TrE-News electronic newsletter published and sent to 4,000 recipients, and stewarded or surveyed 1,874 trees on property owned by the City of Palo Alto or Palo Alto Unified School District.

Public Tree Permits were approved for 14 private property owners to perform specific work on public trees thus saving the City \$18,500 in work value.

Forestry Fund tree replacement contributions from 6 deposits, totaling \$14,800, will enable planting of more trees. Expenditures of \$19,791 paid for contract planting of 30 trees, plus planting supplies for volunteer projects. The fund balance is now \$228,665.

Care

Pruning of 908 trees by City staff augmented contract pruning of 6850 trees, surpassing the annual goal to maintain a 7 year cycle (at 5.08 years), addressing deferred work, and improving response time to about 30 days. Pruning cycle return on (a 10-year) average has been reduced to 6.56 years with record production for three years in a

row. Cycle maintenance in the past has developed a resilient tree population which weathered storms with relatively few failures. 281 limb pick ups were requested for the year.

Pest control was provided to inspect 100 trees, wash with water for nuisance pests on 17, and proactively treat to prevent recurring infestations

on 83. The low number corresponds to a diverse tree species mix in generally fair to good health which has resisted prolific insect and disease threats despite high populations of Tussock Moth and above average populations of aphids during the past year.

Urban Forestry Program Outputs

