

City of Palo Alto Public Works Department

Urban Forestry Section

FY 2013-2014 Accomplishment Report

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

Capacity Building

Performance despite prolonged drought and dramatic increases in construction activity testify to the flexibility and resilience of Palo Alto's urban forestry program.

Partnerships were enhanced with Cal Fire and improved with professional organizations such as the Society of Municipal Arborists and the Arbor Day Foundation. Locally, Canopy contributed \$277,533 of matching support plus 1,115 hours of volunteer service with notable accomplishments such as completion of a survey for sudden oak death, joint training, and

production of a video about how to plant a tree and companion tree planting pocket guide. Additionally Canopy provided great outreach to the community evidenced by 98,686 web page views, 154 inquiries answered, 14 issues of the TreE-News electronic newsletter published and sent to 3,000+ recipients, quarterly tree talk educational presentations, and 11 tree neighborhood walks attended by 242 residents.

Public Tree Permits were approved for 39 private property owners to perform specific work on public trees while

saving the City over \$84,000 in work value.

Urban Forest Protocol version 2.0 was developed by a national team of experts, including Palo Alto's Urban Forester, to establish requirements and guidance for quantifying the carbon sequestration capacity of urban forests. The protocol establishes the basis for carbon credit sales for cap and trade as well as other purposes.

Forestry Fund mitigation contributions of \$5,050 will enable planting of more public trees.

Care

Pruning of 1271 trees by City staff augmented contract capacity, though fell short of the goal to maintain a 7 year cycle (at 8.2 years). The street tree contractor pruned 3025 trees. Consistent cycle maintenance in the

past has developed a resilient tree population which weathered storms with relatively few failures. Only 283 limb pick ups were requested for the year.

Pest control was provided to treat 2 trees with a water wash.

The low number corresponds to a diverse tree species mix in generally fair to good health which has resisted prolific insect and disease threats. One public tree permit was approved for pest control.

Inside highlights:

Customer Service	2
Outreach and Recognition	2
Replenishment	2
Risk Management and Emergency Response	3
Collaboration	3
Staff Development	3
Urban Forest Master Plan	4

Wow Facts!

- \$366,000 + leveraged funding
- 10,000 + customer requests satisfied
- 9,541 work orders processed
- 10,636 + trees pruned (public + utility)
- Urban Forest Master Plan nears completion

Customer Service

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

Inspections increased 45% over the prior year in part due to development related work increasing by 25%.



Professional decisions are frequently needed. Certified arborists on staff performed 1,948 inspections on public trees.

Demand requests were answered by responding to more than 900 inquiries monthly which generated 9,541 work orders during the year

Development Services oversight included 235 tree protection fencing inspections and 99 re-

inspections. Review and comment was provided for 212 planning applications. 66 permits were issued for removal or work on to protected or regulated trees. Landscape reviews and building permits were reviewed and provided with comments. A fully electronic permit submittal and processing system which expedites the administrative process to improve responsiveness/customer service was the

first of its type at the Development Center. Fees for services likely exceeded \$200,000.

CIP and other City of Palo Alto projects were serviced by responsive consulting and tree protection treatments. Projects of note include the golf course, Adobe Creek pedestrian bridge, Magical Bridge playground, Bonde weir, California Avenue, and native landscape at City Hall plaza.

Outreach and Recognition

Advanced assessment of the El Palo Alto Redwood tree using penetrating radar was highlighted internationally

Media coverage was garnered in the Palo Alto online e-newspaper, and professional publications. Stories were published about assessment of the El Palo Alto Redwood tree, the Urban Forest Master Plan, and the Palo Alto golf course.

Outreach was jointly conducted with Canopy and other partners.

Awards are being pur-

sued to recognize the City of Palo Alto as a Tree City USA with a Tree Line USA utility. A meeting with Stanford prompted the University to become recognized as a Tree Campus USA. The ceremony at Stanford included planting 40 trees.

Awareness of the importance of urban forestry was highlighted by Mayor Nancy Shepherd at the

annual Mayor's tree planting event held at the Junior Museum and Zoo.

Memorial recognition was provided for police officers killed in the line of duty by designating a grove of Redwood trees at Cogswell Plaza.

Replenishment



Tree Planting installed 148 new trees into individual vacant tree lawn sites within the right-of-way or parks. The first partnership effort of the season with Canopy resulted in training planting leaders and planting 12 trees at Pardee Park. 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 at Mitchell Park included kids tree climbing, educational stations, a proclamation, tree tour, scavenger hunt, music by the banana slug band, and a performance by the Tree Circus. More than 500

people attended making the event the most popular that anyone could remember.

Risk Management and Emergency Response

Emergency response training was provided to crews. Advanced preparation aided responses to the first significant storms of the season. Tree Section staff provided assistance to inspect drainages, and remove obstructions.

Utility vegetation management continues to be an important service. During the year 6,340 trees were cleared away from power lines thus

protecting public safety and preventing outages. 58 trees were removed under the Right Tree, Right Place Program to allow a utility compatible species to be planted instead. Also significant is the compilation of the first application to 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. 314 removals prevented undesirable outcomes. Drought contributed to an increase of removals as compared to 212 during the past year, a 48% increase.

Code enforcement investigations were completed for 19 cases.



The Right Tree Right Place Program increased to 58 cases during the year from 11 the prior year.

Collaboration

Sustainability is a major topic of interest for the City. Urban Forestry will provide foundational elements to craft environmental management goals which meet the City Manager's goal of being "the greenest City in America". Urban Forester input to the redesign of the Palo Alto Golf Course resulted in environmentally sustainable enhancements. Practices in-

stalled as recommended are anticipated to reduce potable water use by tens of thousands of gallons while enhancing wetlands, wildlife habitat, and native plants. In addition ecosystem services calculations recognizing holistic environmental improvements are estimated to save the project \$500,000 or more over traditional mitigation approaches.

The City of Palo Alto Comprehensive Plan is being revised. Urban Forestry Section staff have contributed and will continue to be involved.

The Foothills Fire Management Plan was advanced by staff contributions as part of an inter-departmental team as well as planning restoration and monitoring of the prescribed burn.

"Our goal is for Palo Alto to be the greenest City in America"
Jim Keene, City Manager

Staff Development

A Business Plan was revised to encourage innovation and flexibility. Staff participated to maintain a shared vision.

Training and shadowing opportunities have been employed to advance skills, build capacity, and improve responsiveness. Internal, local, and low cost options have been

used. All Tree Section staff have benefitted from training with webinars, local professional seminars about safety and insect and disease management, the Tree Failure data base seminar in Woodside.

A vacancy for Project Manager resulted in selection of Courtney

Schumm following a nationwide search and multi-step selection process. During her first six months with the City of Palo Alto, Courtney attended and graduated from the Municipal Forester Institute. Joe Rapanut obtained status as a certified arborist. Glenn Berry obtained status as a certified tree worker.



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

The tree El Palo Alto is the namesake for the City, the logo, and a symbol representing the importance of the urban forest to all Palo Altans. El Palo Alto guided bold pioneers to discover a special place long ago and also represents our goal for a greener future.



CITY OF
**PALO
ALTO**

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 grow a good program into a nationally recognized model.

Urban Forest Master Plan

The Urban Forest Master Plan is nearing completion. Peer review is descriptive of the quality and distinctiveness of the plan. Susan Rosenberg, co-founder of Canopy wrote “I have worked closely with the city and community since 1995 and this is a dream come true. It expresses a thorough knowledge of Palo Alto’s urban forest and a vision for the future”. Susan Ellis, chair of the Canopy board of directors says “the representation of the public input is terrific”. Carolyn Raffensperger, author of *Future Generations and the Commons*, called the Palo Alto UFMP “brilliant”. These comments represent a small sample of more than 600 from members of the community and advocates. The

synthesis of this community voice is truly one of the notable features.

Social benefits are difficult to quantify, yet the UFMP proposes innovative new partnerships, motivators, and collaborations such as engaging community members through open source inventory as one way to unify management across properties and blur segregation between public and private responsibility. Technology is emphasized to identify opportunities to maximize ecosystem benefits while also enhancing solar power collection using LIDAR 3-D imagery analysis. Business practices are carefully evaluated with recommendations to maximize revenues in

comparison to costs thus improving the “profit margin” by employing cutting edge ecosystem enhancement projects like the Palo Alto Golf Course or potential use of the newly revised Urban Forest Protocol to garner revenue from the cap and trade market for addition to carbon stocks.

Final edits are underway in preparation for consideration of adoption by City Council during calendar year 2014.

The Mission of the Urban Forest Master Plan is to create greater harmony between people and nature.