



Weekly Management Report

December 8, 2023

1. Memo

**Urban Forest Master Plan Update
Park and Recreation Department**

MEMORANDUM




PARKS AND RECREATION



DATE: December 1, 2023

TO: Justin Hess, City Manager

FROM: Marisa Garcia, Park, Recreation, and Community Services Director 

SUBJECT: Urban Forest Master Plan Update

At the November 14, 2023 City Council meeting, Vice-Mayor Schultz requested an update on the development of an Urban Forest Master Plan for the City of Burbank.

BACKGROUND

Burbank's trees are a valuable community resource and a critical component of the City's infrastructure, as well as an important part of the City's identity and history. The Parks and Recreation Department (Department) is responsible for the care and management of Burbank's public trees.

The Department's involvement with the Tree City USA program for over 46 years is a testament to the City's commitment to preserving its urban forest. To proactively manage the City's urban forest, in 1999, the Department contracted with Davey Resource Group (DRG) to conduct a street tree inventory. TreeKeeper, an urban forestry management system developed by DRG, is used by the Department to store and maintain the City's street tree inventory, including all maintenance records. In 2007, DRG conducted an inventory of trees located in City parks.

In March 2008, DRG was commissioned to complete the City of Burbank's Municipal Forest Resource Analysis (Analysis). The Analysis included the findings of both inventories (a total of 32,077 trees) combined with a benefit-cost modeling data to produce quantified information on the tree's structure, function, and value.

In summary, the Analysis determined that the overall age structure of the City's public trees was near ideal and the majority of trees were reportedly in good condition. The street tree canopy cover was estimated at 331 acres, or 3% of the total land area and 19.8% of the total street and sidewalk area. The replacement value of the 32,077 trees was estimated at \$162 million. Additionally, Burbank's public trees return more than double the community investment in terms of stormwater runoff reductions, energy savings, atmospheric CO2 reductions, and other benefits. The report concluded that

Burbank's public trees are a valuable asset, providing approximately \$4.3 million in annual gross benefits. When considering maintenance costs, the trees provide \$2.4 million in net annual benefits.

Furthermore, the Analysis made recommendations for the continued management of the City's public trees. Recommendations included:

- Expand new tree planting programs;
- Increase total canopy cover, thus increasing the environmental benefits;
- Diversify species through new tree plantings;
- Establish a citywide, cyclical pruning program aimed at increasing overall benefits and effectively mitigating developing safety risks;
- Continue to utilize TreeKeeper® to manage the public tree inventory and to track maintenance activities.

Although not a formal recommendation, the Analysis suggested that the City would benefit from a comprehensive urban forest management plan.

DISCUSSION

The Analysis has been a tool for making management and policy decisions regarding the City's trees and their care over the last 15 years. While the Department has implemented most of the recommendations, it has not developed a comprehensive urban forest management plan. However, in 2022, the Department included the following two actions in the City's Green Gas Reduction Plan (GGRP):

Action CS-1.1.d Develop an Urban Forest [Master] Plan to identify City's potential capacity for new tree planting, identify a timeframe for implementation and provide a management plan for existing trees.

Action CS-1.1.f Conduct an urban canopy study and identify low income and/or disadvantaged communities with lower-than-average tree canopy coverage in order to prioritize planting in these areas to provide equitable access to the health and resiliency benefits of trees.

As adopted in the GGRP, these action items are identified as phase 2 of the implementation plan, to be completed between 2026 and 2028.

The development of an Urban Forest Master Plan is important, and staff supports the Sustainable Burbank Commission's recommendation that Council consider prioritizing completion of an Urban Forest Master Plan.

CONCLUSION

Staff is currently obtaining a proposal and cost estimate for the development of an Urban Forest Master Plan to include: updating the City's park and street tree inventory, conduct a health assessment of all City-owned trees, complete an urban canopy study, review the City's tree policies and procedures, assess the City-wide pruning cycle, and conduct community engagement. Staff estimates the development of a comprehensive plan to take up to a year to complete with a cost of up to \$900,000.

The Department will request funding for the development of Burbank's Urban Forest Master Plan as part of the Fiscal Year (FY) 2024-2025 Budget process for Council consideration. If funded as part of the FY 2024-2025 Budget, an Urban Forest Master Plan will be completed by June 2025.

cc: Parks and Recreation Board
Sustainable Burbank Commission