

Urban Forest Plan

Partner Advisory Committee Meeting #4

December 13, 2023 | 5:00 – 6:30 PM

Meeting Summary

On Wednesday, December 13, 2023, the City of Sacramento held the fourth and final meeting of the Partner Advisory Committee (PAC) for the Urban Forest Plan (UFP). The meeting took place from 5:00-6:30 p.m. at Sacramento City Hall, located at 915 I Street, in Sacramento.

The following City staff and project team members attended the meeting:

- **Rachel Patten**, Sustainability Analyst, Public Works
- **Lucinda Willcox**, Assistant Public Works Director, Public Works
- **Kevin Hocker**, City Urban Forester, Public Works
- **Sarah Kolarik**, Sustainability Analyst, Office of Climate Action and Sustainability
- **Taner Pasamehmetoglu**, Arts Program Assistant, Office of Climate Action and Sustainability

PAC members attended the meeting, representing the following organizations:

- 350 Sacramento
- California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CALFIRE)
- Elmhurst Neighborhood Association
- Hollywood Park Neighborhood Association CommuniTree Project
- Meadowview Urban Tree Canopy Project (MUTP)
- North Natomas community
- Preservation Sacramento
- River Park Tree Canopy Project
- Sacramento Metropolitan Air Quality Management District (SMAQMD)
- Sacramento Municipal Utilities District (SMUD)
- Sacramento Tree Foundation
- Trees4Sacramento

After the third PAC meeting, on Thursday November 2, 2023, PAC members were asked to review and provide comments on the Preliminary Administrative Draft Urban Forest Plan. The PAC's review was focused on: recommendations for Vision Statements, prioritization of Implementation Measures, and identifying any major topic areas that were missing, unclear, or inaccurate.

PAC members were asked to provide comments through two methods:

- 1) Responding to a digital survey
- 2) Sending additional comments not captured by the survey via email

The focus of PAC meeting #4 was to summarize the PAC feedback on the Preliminary Administrative Draft Urban Forest Plan, provide staff responses to major topic areas, facilitate group discussion of the plan and allow final comments, and finally to outline the next steps for the UFP and the PAC.

Meeting Agenda

- Welcome and Introductions
- Summary of survey responses and comments
- How staff will respond to comments
- Next steps for the draft Urban Forest Plan and Partner Advisory Committee
- Discussion/Question and Answer

Meeting Notes

Summary of Survey Responses and Comments

18 of 31 PAC members completed the digital survey to provide feedback and comments on the Preliminary Administrative Draft Urban Forest Plan. The survey consisted of 15 questions that asked participants to rank preferred Vision Statements, prioritize Implementation Strategies from each of the five Goals of the UFP, rank how well they felt the UFP addressed the unique needs and challenges of Sacramento's urban forest, and spaces for narrative comments on each topic. The results of that survey are as follows:

Vision Statement

Survey respondents voted for the vision statement:

The City of Sacramento, together with community investment and involvement, will reinforce Sacramento's legacy as the "City of Trees". The City will address historic inequity in access to nature, and prioritize the sustainable management and expansion of the urban tree canopy to provide extensive benefits and reprieve from the impacts of climate change for generations of Sacramentans to come.

Priority Implementation Strategies

There were nine total Implementation Strategies across all five Goals that at least ~50% of survey respondents voted as high priority for implementation. Those Implementation Strategies fell into four broad categories: 1) Funding for UFP strategies, 2) Shading streets and sidewalks, 3) Supporting Disadvantaged Communities, and 4) Protecting native trees.

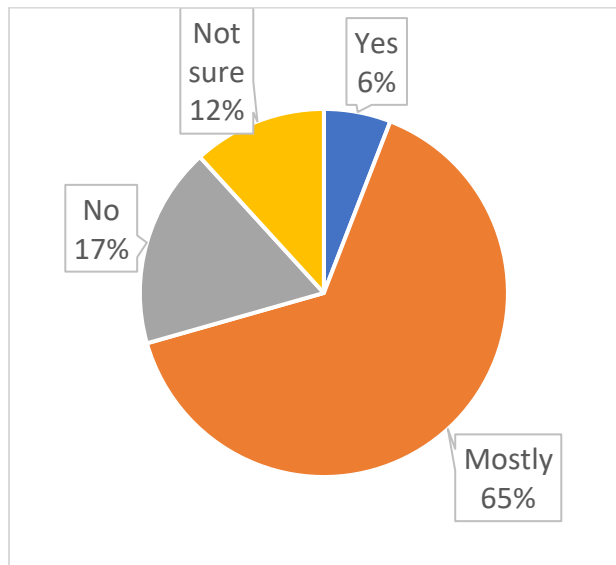
The nine high priority Implementation Strategies listed in order of priority ranking were:

- **5.1.2** Pursue an increase in dedicated long-term funding to provide an increased level of tree canopy, perform associated care and maintenance, and expand core urban forestry services and programs.
- **5.2.1** Explore providing financial support to residents in disadvantaged communities for tree planting and care.

- **1.2.7** Support the achievement of 50 percent tree shading over streets and sidewalks.
- **3.4.3** When designing transportation improvements, support the inclusion of adequate tree canopy to provide substantial shade for active transportation infrastructure and support achievement of 50 percent shading on streets and sidewalks.
- **4.2.3** Strengthen partnerships with entities in disadvantaged and low tree canopy neighborhoods.
- **3.4.3** When designing transportation improvements, support the inclusion of adequate tree canopy to provide substantial shade for active transportation infrastructure and support achievement of 50 percent shading on streets and sidewalks.
- **4.2.3** Strengthen partnerships with entities in disadvantaged and low tree canopy neighborhoods.
- **3.1.3** Strengthen collaboration and support between all City departments that manage trees.
- **5.1.1** Perform a cost analysis to determine the projected cost to meet the tree planting and maintenance targets identified in the Urban Forest Plan to reach 35 percent canopy cover by 2045.

Effectiveness of the UFP

Survey respondents voted that the Preliminary Administrative Draft Urban Forest Plan “Mostly” addressed the unique needs and challenges of Sacramento’s Urban Forest.



Comments about why the draft plan did not fully address the needs of Sacramento’s urban forest mainly focused on the need for more resource allocation, additional specifics about implementation, and aggressive private property canopy goals. Many comments also expressed appreciation of the details and high-level guidance that the UFP draft provided.

General Feedback

In addition to the 18 survey responses, Staff also received 8 comment letters via email. Staff will review and respond to the feedback through two ways:

- 1) Incorporate changes into public review draft. (E.g., higher-level changes)

- 2) Respond to comments during the public review period (E.g., more specific implementation action changes or topics that require broader public discussion)

There were four major theme's that appeared in many survey responses and comment emails that staff wanted to address directly with the PAC.

Strengthen Language

PAC Comments: Reduce the use of words that do not convey a specific measurable outcome or add a measurable outcome to the statement to bolster words like “encourage,” “seek,” and “support.”

Staff Response: We will go through and look at each instance, limit the usage as much as possible, and add direction. Some will likely stay in the document based on staffs' authority to recommend changes and ability/resources to guarantee policies and programs.

Increase Canopy Goal

PAC Comments: Some calls to increase the overall canopy goal above 35% or to achieve the 35% goal before 2045.

Staff Response: Based on UTC report by Davey, underlying ecological conditions, and urban forestry best practices, staff believe 35% canopy (shading 35% of the entire land surface of the City of Sacramento) is the maximum feasible that we can achieve on this timeline.

We want to set an ambitious but realistic goal. 35% would nearly double the number of trees in the City. Nothing will prevent us from exceeding this goal.

City Maintenance of Private Trees

PAC Comments: Calls to revive previous practices of planting and maintaining trees on private property.

Staff Response: Several decades ago, the City attempted to help homeowners provide care of trees in the “private maintenance easement” or private front yard trees in close physical and visual proximity to public-right-of-way trees. After review, it was identified that not only did this result in unacceptably long pruning cycles, but was also not an allowable practice. Since 1990, only trees within public-right-of-way easements are pruned by the City.

Legally, the City does not have the right to begin pruning trees on private property without permission or an easement, and that process does not appear feasible. While staff does not see a legal avenue for the City to directly care for trees on private property, the Plan does explore alternative options to provide tree care assistance through other programs.

To grow tree canopy on private property the City must:

- Support increased planting efforts.
- Support ongoing tree maintenance.

Policy + Implementation Actions recommended to address this need:

- **1.3.2** Support and facilitate canopy expansion efforts on private property across the City with focus in priority communities.
- **2.3.6** Support the use of proper pruning techniques on privately maintained trees.
- **4.2.2** Support and encourage businesses to increase tree canopy.
- **5.2.1** Explore providing financial support to residents in disadvantaged communities for tree planting and care.
- **5.2.2** Explore financial incentives to support residents with mature trees.

Continued Involvement of the PAC

PAC Comments: The City should continue to involve the PAC in the implementation of the UFP and/or create a tree commission.

Staff Response: It is currently not a Council priority to expand commissions. Community members are welcome to recommend this to Council for consideration.

The PAC's feedback is extremely valuable in the development of this planning and visioning document. Staff are not recommending ongoing engagement with this specific group past the plan development. But implementation of the UFP will require deep engagement with many partners and constituents.

Policy + Implementation Actions recommended to address this need:

- **1.2.2** Amend Sacramento City Code as necessary to improve tree canopy inclusion and require minimum levels of tree planting in development projects.
- **3.1.4** Conduct annual reporting on the urban forest plan to ensure progress towards goals and appropriate resource allocation.
- **4.1 Community Engagement:** Support community advocacy for and involvement in the urban forest.
- **4.2 Partner Coordination:** Facilitate coordination, involvement, and commitment from all entities that own, control, regulate, or affect the urban forest.
- **4.3 Youth Engagement:** Cultivate youth engagement in the urban forest to continue Sacramento's legacy of tree stewardship.
- **4.4 Workforce Development:** Advance career pathways in urban forestry.

Next Steps

Staff finalize public review draft over the next few months. Public review will likely begin winter/spring 2024.

- Goal of Feb. 2024 for launch of public review period
- At least 30 days of public review
- Will go through commissions, Council, community meetings, and have an online public review draft.
- PAC can comment again at that time. PAC can share widely with their networks.

Discussion / Q&A

Below is a summary of the large group discussion that followed the meeting presentation.

- 1) *Will there be a mailing list that updates people every time something happens on the project (e.g., missing middle, CAAP)?*
 - **Project team response:** Yes! We have a mailing list [Join mailing list for email updates](#) We can automatically add the full PAC to the list. And We will send notices throughout process.
- 2) *Ordinance reviews will go through Law and Leg?*
 - **Project team response:** Correct
- 3) *Rancho Cordova has a program to provide free trees to property owners. Has the City of Sacramento considered that?*
 - **Project team response:** No, the City hasn't looked at the approach of providing trees directly to homeowners. STF already runs this type of program and is partnering with the City of Rancho Cordova to offer that program. The City not set up to administer its own free tree program at this point.

We do have recommended Policy and Implementation Strategies recommended in the UFP to address financial assistance to homeowners for tree planting and care, understanding that this is can be a financial obstacle that prevents tree care.

- 4) *You mentioned that the City used to have a tree easement.*
 - **Project team response:** There has never been a tree easement. The City used to trim trees in what was called a "private maintenance easement" but was just private front yards that were close physically and visually to the public-right-of-way. The City did this work because it was a public good. But, the City didn't have the financial resources to continue, and it negatively impacted broader tree maintenance capacity. It's also not legal for the City to do that work without property owner permission, so we can't just start doing it again.
- 5) *Trees for Sacramento is interested in continuing a dialogue for implementation. Can't wait 5 years with the timelines on this plan. Requesting sign ups to mailing list.*
- 6) *Interest in keeping the dialogue open (echoed from many members)*
 - **Project team response:** Implementation Strategy 4.1.3 – tree ambassador program as an avenue for continued engagement.
- 7) *Frustration regarding that developers remove a lot of trees and feeling that petitions to save trees don't matter. Need this change to happen before the 0-5 year timeline for most tasks. Regulations feel like they are set up to remove trees.*
 - **Project team response:** Need this plan in place to advance some of the ordinance update pieces.
- 8) *Front yard maintenance – EJCGC had discussed that many of those homes receiving that maintenance were in low-income areas. Want to find ways to incentivize people. Need to find ways to help cover unaffordable costs of tree maintenance. Lack of equity.*
- 9) *Community education. Are people adequately watering trees in their yards? Need outreach. Can there be information as part of the low-water use application that provide info about tree watering needs?*
 - **Project team response:** Yes, great idea!

- 10) *City should be looking into marketing for this thing. Needs to have central management from the City*
- 11) *Document is amazing! Full of information.*
- 12) *For easement issue. Isn't it a policy issue?*
- **Project team response:** No policy around it. Something that changed prior to the 1994 Urban Forest Management Plan.
 - *If owner gave permission, you could do it.*
 - **Project team response:** Theoretically, but we would need a program in place to do so. Liability and cost are major concerns that makes this infeasible. Operationally it would be challenging and very inefficient because each property owner would need to opt-in and give permission, likely resulting in a patchwork of homes receiving care. We won't have more staff or money to do this so a program of this type would decrease City tree maintenance overall, which was a major factor for moving away from the practice originally.
 - *What about overarching benefit of reducing urban heat island impact? Liability concerns of climate change. Lots of benefits from trees (e.g., multi-modal safety, etc.). Looking at doing something precedent setting. How do we make these big goals happen?*
- 13) *Community partnerships and awareness. Need that first to bring in the money needed for the UFP. Would want to see that as part of the priority of implementation.*
- 14) *State Water Board outdoor water efficiency standards decrease amount allocated for water providers for outdoor water use. What about incentives for outdoor asphalt removal that have related benefit? Asphalt is part of the water efficiency score. Can you look at all City incentives city wide.*
- **Project team response:** Yes, we will talk with DOU
 - *Fellows at Air District are working on an urban heat island project. Trees are fantastic, but also cool pavements. Both heat mitigation measures together.*
 - *Doesn't have to be an either or. How do you make it work together at a high level. But driveways – do people need that much parking? Can there be incentives to remove pavement? And remaining pavement could be cool pavements. Reducing parking and replacing with trees.*
 - *Cal Fire: reflective paints are not proven yet. More of a band-aid approach. Caution around this approach.*
 - *State laws that reduce and/or eliminate requirements for off-street parking (e.g., not required for ADUs, not required for other new development (??))*

- 15) *Also artificial turf removal. Can City ban? Not supposed to have artificial turf under the drip line of the tree. Not in the tree ordinance (Title 12.56), but in a separate City policy (Title 17).*
- 16) *Objective design standards are needed to preserve existing canopy in infill projects. Matt and Ngyuen (Planning staff) said they were going to start working on that.*
- **Project team response:** Yes, CDD has started working on the Missing Middle Housing update and our project team are engaged in discussions with them about the needs of trees/canopy related to those updates.
- 17) *Old arena side in Natomas is a giant parking lot with dying trees. Want to see parking garages rather than sprawl. With solar on top*
- *Or transit and active transportation so we don't need parking lots!*
- 18) *Home insurance conflicts. Home insurance providers are pulling out of CA. They are wanting people to remove all trees on property to receive insurance (they are looking for any reason to drop coverage). Does the City fit into that conversation? Discussion with the insurance commissioner? Using wildfires as excuse, even in urban areas.*
- **Project team response:** This is a great flag. We will looking this.
- 19) *NASA cool community project. Projected that doubling the canopy would reduce ambient air temperature by a couple degrees.*
- 20) *Want to see pervious pavement if pavement is needed in the future. Concern about flooding. Want a holistic approach to ordinances so that they work together to create a green city.*
- 21) *North Natomas Development Commission reviews proposals (e.g., a hotel). They are including a bioretention facility as part of the periphery of the facility. Includes trees in facilities.*
- *But caution that the correct trees are planted. Needs to be carefully designed.*
 - *Rain gardens. DC will design these for you.*
 - *North Natomas has a lot of retention basins. Not a combined storm-sewer system.*
- 22) *Post-project clean-up. Frustration about working with the City since they see old materials (e.g., stakes or out of date irrigation).*
- **Project team response:** Can you give more details about the project that has issues?
 - *Native tree planting*
 - *Regional park is mostly undeveloped. Lots of construction debris that doesn't make it safe to use. Sheep and goats do weed maintenance.*
- 23) *Process question: Best case scenario. When will it get all of the necessary approvals and to start implementation?*
- **Project team response:** Firstly, we are not waiting for the plan adoption for high-level things we know are needed (e.g., increased planting in DACs). Already got approval to add trees to street design update and the Streets for People Active Transportation Plan.

Best case scenario is public review will start in Feb. and go through March-early April. Processing comments will take a couple of months. The best case is adoption middle of May. Otherwise, will wait until after the budget is adopted in mid-July.

24) *How can this group support next steps?*

- **Project team response:** Go back into the plan during public review. Share with networks. Want this to get a lot of detailed, diverse feedback. For implementation – not quite there yet. PAC will be tapped as part of that process. Getting through this step first.

25) *Will the PAC receive direct responses to the comments they submitted? Want to know how they were addressed. Access to public comments?*

- **Project team response:** Wasn't going to directly respond to each comment. Happy to have deeper discussions as requested. Everyone will have access to the summary of public comments with responses as part of the Council report package. Responses will be grouped by topic.

26) *Want to see another canopy assessment. This wasn't highlighted in top takeaways. Last time was 2018/2019. Want to see change from "ground zero" from adoption.*

- **Project team response:** Noted. There is an implementation measure regarding the more frequent canopy assessments.
 - *Been 5 years from the Davey Resource Group. Money issue?*
 - **Project team response:** Everything is tradeoffs. Could spend money on a canopy assessment, but would have to reduce spending elsewhere.
 - *How much did it cost?*
 - **Project team response:** Assessment was part of the bigger DRG contract. We can look into determining how much was specifically for the canopy data.

27) *35% increase of tree canopy for what? What's the baseline for the 35% increase?*

- **Project team response:** The goal is not an increase from a baseline – the goal is to achieve 35% of ALL city land area as being covered by tree canopy.

28) *Conflicts/alignment with missing middle housing. Front setbacks are being removed with missing middle. Need to save space for trees. Many benefits from those trees. Don't want lots to be developed without any space for trees.*

- **Project team response:** Currently working with the missing middle housing staff on this update and improving provisions for trees.
 - *Setbacks for second story of home that allow for tree canopy. Some housing advocates want to remove that setback. Though flexible design standards to save trees on request. Want to see sign off of trees being planted as part of the site.*
 - **Project team response:** Kevin and Rachel are coordinating with them. Requesting reductions in rear yard setbacks instead of setbacks in front in public realm. Talking about minimum

reasonable space for trees and requiring trees in development.
Will share this info and have that dialogue with them.

- *PUDs – can have a very large tree that would provide shade for multiple homes on a street.*

29) *Charts of sizes of trees that would be planted. Lots of favoritism toward small trees, not medium or large. Want to see large trees along streets and sidewalks. Want to maximize canopy where there is space for it.*

- **Project team response:** The tables don't recommend which trees we plant. One is about how many of each size of tree would be needed to meet canopy goal (pg. 21). The other table is for trees currently on the street tree list (pg. 47)
 - *Want to see 8' in parkways to have enough space for trees in parkway strip.*
 - *Can all ordinances be aligned to meaningfully contribute to City canopy?*

30) *Key opportunities: private industry partnerships. Want to see no net loss of tree canopy. Tree removals would require tree planting elsewhere. Tree planting on schools. Maintenance is a big challenge. Want to see that partnership. Partnership with State. Cal Fire program was mandated to increase canopy cover across the state. Also urban canopy cover assessment taking place statewide.*

31) *Lots of state buildings in Sacramento. Lots of new developments that haven't included a lot of tree canopy.*

- *State buildings and public schools are DSA. Fall under state building code. That code doesn't encourage planting a lot of trees.*
 - *State of CA recently establishes 35% canopy cover, 50% parking lot coverage requirements for NEW schools*

32) *Underground infrastructure. Conflicts with SMUD infrastructure. City investment in EV charging will pose a conflict. Want the City to map these out together. Share that information regarding planting potential.*