

Proposed General Plan Update Goals, Policies and Implementation Actions



Community Forest

Item 5.e – November 23, 2009 Task Force Meeting

San Jose’s Community Forest consists of trees growing on public property, such as street right-of-ways, parks, community centers, libraries and schools; and trees growing on private property, including trees in the backyards of homes, shopping center parking lots, and within the landscaped area of high-technology office buildings. The Community Forest provides scenic beauty, serves as a barrier to wind and as a visual buffer, and provides shade to reduce heat in urban areas. The Community Forest also filters pollutants from the air, helps conserve energy and water use, replenishes oxygen, and protects against flood hazards, landslides, and soil erosion by absorbing rain water. Native and landscape trees within this Forest provides important wildlife habitat for birds and other animals living in urban areas. All large specimen and heritage trees, especially native oaks, have special aesthetic and historical values. Street trees promote neighborhood traffic safety by encouraging motorists to drive more slowly. The City’s Community Forest softens the effects of urban development, raises neighborhood and commercial property values, and contributes to the community’s identity and sense of place.

Goal CF-1 Preserve and protect existing trees and increase plantings of new trees within the City to create and maintain a thriving Community Forest that contributes to the City’s quality of life, its sense of community and its economic and environmental well being.

CF-1 Community Forest Policies

Policies CF-1.1 Manage the Community Forest to achieve the City’s environmental goals for water and energy conservation, wildlife habitat preservation, stormwater retention, heat reduction in urban areas, energy conservation, and the removal of carbon from the atmosphere.

Policies CF-1.2 Provide the appropriate resources to preserve, protect and expand the City’s Community Forest.

Policies CF-1.3 Ensure that San Jose’s Community Forest is comprised of species that have low water requirements and are well adapted to the city’s Mediterranean climate, and plant diverse species to prevent monocultures that are vulnerable to pest invasions. Furthermore, consider the appropriate placement of tree species and their lifespan to ensure the perpetuation of the Community Forest.

Policies CF-1.4 Encourage the maintenance of mature trees on public and private property as an integral part of the community forest. Prior to allowing the removal of any mature tree, pursue all reasonable measures to effectively preserve the tree.

- Policies CF-1.5 As part of the development review process, preserve protected trees (as defined by the Municipal Code), and other significant trees. Any adverse affect on the health and longevity of protected or other significant trees should be avoided through appropriate design measures and construction practices. Special priority should be give to the preservation of native oaks. When tree preservation is not feasible, appropriate tree replacement should be included.
- Policies CF-1.6 As a condition of new development, require, where appropriate, the planting and maintenance of both street trees and trees on private property.
- Policies CF-1.7 Manage infrastructure to ensure that the placement and maintenance of street trees, streetlights, signs and other infrastructure assets are integrated. Give priority to tree placement in designing or modifying streets.
- Policies CF-1.8 Encourage the selection of trees appropriate for a particular urban site. Tree type and placement should consider energy saving values, nearby power lines, and root characteristics.
- Policies CF-1.9 Where appropriate, incorporate native trees into urban plantings in order to provide food and cover for native wildlife species.
- Policies CF-1.10 Where urban development occurs adjacent to natural plant communities (e.g., oak woodland, riparian forest), landscape plantings should incorporate tree species native to the area.
- Policy CF-1.11 Encourage the planting of native oak trees in new development, where appropriate.
- Policy CF-1.12 Discourage the planting of invasive non-native trees and removal of existing invasive non-native trees through the development review process or through capital improvement projects, where feasible.

CF-1 Community Forest Actions

- Action CF-1.13 Create and maintain an inventory of the City’s street and park trees.
- Action CF-1.14 Complete the development of a Community Forest Master Plan that provides a strategy to achieve the City’s Community Forest Goals; implement this Master Plan.
- Action CF-1.15 Develop performance measures for tree planting and canopy coverage which measure the City’s success in achieving the Community Forest goals. These performance measures should inform tree planting goals for the years between 2022 (the horizon year for the Green Vision) and 2040.
- Action CF-1.16 Secure adequate human and financial resources to oversee all City tree services, to implement policies and to address the deferred and on-going maintenance funding needs for the community forest.

- Action CF-1.17 Expand the City’s existing partnership with Our City Forest, and develop new partnerships with other non-profits, businesses, other agencies and the community, to maximize available resources to maintain and expand the Community Forest.
- Action CF-1.18 Collaborate with other government agencies – local, state and federal – to leverage resources to achieve the City’s Community Forest goal.
- Action CF-1.19 Continue to support volunteer urban forestry programs that encourage the participation of citizens in tree planting and maintenance in neighborhoods and parks throughout the City.
- Action CF-1.20 Continue to implement the Heritage Tree Ordinance to maintain and protect San Jose’s heritage trees.
- Action CF-1.21 Periodically update the heritage tree list, identifying trees of special significance to the community.
- Action CD-1.22 Explore development of a tree removal mitigation in-lieu fee and program, allowing development applicants to provide for planting of replacement trees through a city-managed in-lieu fee/tree planting program.