



Land Use, Sustainability, and Resilience Committee

City of Arts & Innovation

TO: LAND USE, SUSTAINABILITY, AND RESILIENCE COMMITTEE MEMBERS

DATE: JANUARY 9, 2023

FROM: PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT

WARDS: ALL

SUBJECT: UPDATE ON THE URBAN FORESTRY POLICY MANUAL

ISSUE:

Receive an update on the Urban Forestry Policy Manual.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

That the Land Use, Sustainability, and Resilience Committee:

1. Receive and file the update on the Urban Forestry Policy Manual;
2. Allow additional time for updating the Manual, with updates provided to the Land Use, Sustainability, and Resilience Committee as they come forward; and
3. Provide additional recommendations on desired modifications to the Urban Forestry Policy Manual.

BACKGROUND:

The City of Riverside is known as a City of Trees, having been designated as a “Tree City, USA” by the National Arbor Day Foundation every year since 1987. The purpose of the Urban Forestry Policy Manual (Manual) is to provide guidelines for the preservation and protection of our tree heritage and the Urban Forest of Riverside. The Manual provides guidelines for the planting, pruning, preservation, and removal of all trees in city right-of-ways based on specifications established by the International Society of Arboriculture (ISA), the National Arborists Association (NAA), and the American National Standards Institute (ANSI).

City staff routinely review the Manual and bring proposed changes before the Land Use, Sustainability, and Resilience Committee (Committee) for feedback and approval. The most recent update was presented on January 11, 2021. At that time, the Committee directed staff to work with an Ad Hoc Committee of the Park and Recreation Commission to receive further recommendations on updating the Manual to reflect current needs and changes.

The Committee received the report and requested the following items be considered with the Park

and Recreation Commission Ad Hoc Committee:

1. Research ways of providing advanced notice to area residents when trees are being removed;
2. Research ways of planting new trees before trees are removed to help maintain continuity of the urban forest in neighborhoods;
3. Work with additional community, volunteer and environmental groups throughout the City;
4. Provide public outreach on the benefits and assets of the urban forest; and
5. Draw clear distinctions between public and private trees.

On April 2, 2022, the first meeting was held with a three-member Ad Hoc Committee of the Park and Recreation Commission along with Public Works staff. A background of the Manual and the requests from the Land Use, Sustainability and Resilience Committee were provided to the members. A guest speaker from the Inland Empire Forest Council was in attendance and provided an update on current industry practices. In addition, a presentation was provided to the Committee on the urban forestry database and a field trip was conducted to view “stately” trees of Riverside.

On May 4, 2022, a second meeting was held with guest speakers from TreePeople and Board members of Victoria Avenue Forever. A discussion was held on items that should be included for updating the Manual.

On June 15, 2022, a third meeting was held with the Regional Urban Forester for CalFire as the guest speaker. Discussions were continued on items to update the Manual.

On July 13, 2022, a fourth meeting was held at the Riverside-Corona Resource Conservation District headquarters on Glenwood Drive with their Public Affairs Manager as a guest speaker. Discussions were continued on items to update the Manual with a tour of the Riverside-Corona Resource Conservation District’s gardens.

DISCUSSION:

Moving Forward with the Urban Forestry Policy Manual and Sustainability

In conducting the Ad Hoc Committee meetings and hearing from the guest speakers, many ideas and suggestions came forward to help enhance the Manual and bring public awareness to the benefits of the urban forest. Examples of these items include, but are not limited to:

1. Creating an in-house inventory database, instead of relying on contractors;
2. Adding information regarding construction management when working around trees;
3. Adding a “tree standards acknowledgment” before businesses can obtain a Business Tax License for landscapers/tree workers;
4. Working with the Planning Division on trimming standards for new developments;
5. Airing educational segments on trees through RiversideTV;

6. Providing training for arborists working in the City;
7. Creating a flow chart of responsibilities and processes;
8. Adding more pictures to the Manual (fewer words);
9. Periodic updates of the Manual in accordance with ANSI Standards which release every five years;
10. Creating a campaign for people to sign pledges on Anti-Topping; and
11. Improving public outreach efforts.

During the process, staff learned of a CalFire grant that will help assist with updating the Manual. The grant can provide funds to assist the City in selecting tree species that maximize carbon sequestration and building energy reduction potential (in alignment with Envision Riverside Strategic Plan, Goal 4.6). The grant may also fund an in-house tree inventory database. Though not yet accepting applications, staff would like to pursue this grant as it will greatly enhance revisions to the Manual. Additionally, in order to meet the requests that are coming forward from the Park and Recreation Commission Ad Hoc Committee and the various guest speakers, it is highly recommended that additional time is spent with the Ad Hoc Committee, community groups, and industry professionals to provide the best possible product for the community.

The City's urban forest provides social, communal, environmental, and economic benefits to the entire community. These benefits include calming effects associated with being around trees, reduced noise and glare, habitat for wildlife, improved air quality, reduction of heat indexes and water runoff, and help to increase property values. With an estimated value of over \$449 million, the City's urban forest provides value to the entire community.

Ongoing Actions Related to Urban Forestry

In order to meet the objectives set forth within the City's planning documents, City staff have worked diligently to pursue grant funding that allow for the planting of additional trees:

1. The awarded 2020 Transformative Climate Communities grant program includes the planting of 1,000 trees on city right-of-ways and 1,000 trees on private property in the Eastside Neighborhood.
2. The awarded 2019 Affordable Housing and Sustainable Communities program grant includes the planting of hundreds of trees across the right-of-way and surrounding the upcoming Vine Street Mobility Hub.
3. The awarded 2019 Urban Greening Grant includes planting of trees along a two-mile stretch of the planned Gage Canal Trail.
4. The awarded 2018 Urban Greening Grant includes planting of 453 trees at a new urban farmland resource and training center.
5. The awarded 2022 CaliforniaforAll Grant includes funding for Youth Fellows that are being assigned to both the TreePeople non-profit organization and the City of Riverside Public Works Department, Landscape and Urban Forestry Division, to assist with planting, caring for and assessing trees throughout the City.

The City will continue to pursue funding opportunities to augment and care for its Urban Forest.

Noteworthy Endeavors Pertaining to the Urban Forest:

1. The Public Works Department is partnering with Feeding America to glean fruit from the public right of way City maintained orange trees along Victoria Avenue to stock local food pantries and feed the hungry.
2. The Complete Streets Ordinance increases opportunities for tree plantings as part of public roadway projects and requires that all participating development projects provide street trees.

STRATEGIC PLAN ALIGNMENT:

This item contributes to **Strategic Priority 4 – Environmental Stewardship and Goal 4.5:** Maintain and conserve 30% of Riverside’s natural lands in green space including, but not limited to, agricultural lands and urban forests in order to protect and restore Riverside’s rich biodiversity and accelerate the natural removal of carbon, furthering our community’s climate resilience.

This item aligns with each of the Cross-Cutting Threads as follows:

1. **Community Trust** – Management of the City’s urban forest and landscapes benefit all city residents, businesses and visitors by helping to remove gaseous air pollutants, sequestering carbon, and provides shade helping to cool our city during hot summer days.
2. **Equity** – Approval of this action benefits all who live near or travel through the city.
3. **Fiscal Responsibility** – Maintaining City-owned trees and landscapes and their infrastructure supports Public Works’ efforts to minimize inefficiencies and maximize reliability.
4. **Innovation** – By updating the Urban Forestry Policy Manual and looking for additional methods of funding, such as grants to improve technology that manages the urban forest, the Public Works Department is committed to using the best possible resources available in today’s ever-changing markets.
5. **Sustainability & Resiliency** – Trees have been noted as being the “lungs of the earth.” Updating the Urban Forestry Policy Manual through researching and implementing improved methods in the industry that will better enhance the long-term care of our urban forest provides proof that the City of Riverside is committed to sustainability and resiliency by maintaining and supporting our valuable urban forest on a continuous basis, helping to improve the environment and the quality of life for our community.

FISCAL IMPACT:

There is no fiscal impact associated with this report.

Prepared by: Gilbert Hernandez, Public Works Director
Certified as to
availability of funds: Edward Enriquez, Interim Assistant City Manager/Chief Financial

Officer/City Treasurer

Approved by: Kris Martinez, Assistant City Manager

Approved as to form: Phaedra A. Norton, City Attorney

Attachments:

1. April 2, 2022 Ad Hoc Committee Agenda
2. May 4, 2022 Ad Hoc Committee Agenda
3. June 15, 2022 Ad Hoc Committee Agenda
4. July 13, 2022 Ad Hoc Committee Agenda
5. 2015 Urban Forestry Policy Manual
6. Presentation