

On April 28, 2015, the City Council concurred with the Committee's recommendations and Public Works Urban Forestry staff worked with an Ad-Hoc Committee of the Park and Recreation Commission (Commission) to review and update the 2007 Manual to facilitate those changes, including:

1. Increased flexibility when considering tree removal;
2. Changes in practices that have been implemented over the past several years based on direction from the Commission and City management; and
3. Administrative updates to names, technical terms, and general data.

On July 13, 2015, the Parks and Recreation Commission unanimously approved a Manual update that included several key changes including:

1. Authorization provided to the Public Works Director or their designee to approve all tree removals. A quarterly report of all removals will be provided to the Commission. Although these changes were implemented several years prior, at the recommendation of the Commission and management, they had not been formally adopted in the Manual. These changes can be found on pages 14, 15, and 16.
2. The California Pepper (*Schinus molle*) was added to the category of Class I inappropriate trees. Mature California Pepper trees, located throughout the City, are at the age in their life cycle where additional monitoring is required to help mitigate failures. Past failures from the mature trees resulted in vehicle and real property damages. In addition, the California Pepper tree is a fast-growing tree with an invasive and damaging root system that requires ongoing out of cycle trimming. The species' addition to the inappropriate class allowing for removal by the City, subject to funding availability, is reflected on page 16 of the Manual.
3. Guidelines for removal of Class II inappropriate trees (Holly Oak and Elm Trees) have been changed to allow the property owners to remove and replace at their expense with the approval of the Public Works Director or their designee. This change is reflected on page 16.
4. In 2008, Riverside Municipal Code §14.08.020 was amended to require the City to maintain private lateral sewer lines from the property line to the point of connection at the City's main sewer line. The property owner continues to be responsible for the sewer lateral between the property line and the home or business. This includes mitigating any issues related to city tree roots and is now reflected on page 28.
5. In order to document the city's intent to proactively address problematic trees while working cooperatively with residents, the following language was also added:
 - a. Tree Care Guidelines, addition on page 6: *"It is the goal of the City of Riverside to work closely with our residents and property owners to proactively remove problematic trees such as those with invasive root systems that are causing chronic infrastructure damages and replace these problematic trees with appropriate tree species that are suitable for the surrounding environment."*

- b. Removal Process, on page 16: Language has been added to help facilitate the removal of problematic trees on streets “...if there is full community support and approval to remove all the trees that are considered problematic on one (1) street of a neighborhood and replace with an approved appropriate species.”

DISCUSSION:

Efficacy of Previous Manual Updates & Future Updates:

Following the implementation of the Manual’s 2015 updates, there has been added flexibility for staff working with individual residents regarding problematic trees. This flexibility has helped to reduce overall complaints from property owners that have been experiencing ongoing issues with the city tree(s). The updates have additionally helped the Public Works Engineering and Streets Divisions better facilitate repairs of damaged infrastructure such as curb, gutter, sidewalks and roadways caused by invasive tree root systems. After a tree is removed staff works closely with the property owner on installing a new tree, if they desire one, that will be compatible with the surrounding infrastructure.

Over the past five years we have found that the updated Manual has been effective. Staff will be working with an Ad-HOC committee of the Park and Recreation Commission in 2021 to receive further recommendations on updating the Manual to reflect any current changes that have evolved over the past five years. Staff will also be engaging with community groups such as Neighbors of the Wood Streets (NOWS) and Victoria Avenue Forever (VAF) to develop recommendations they would like to see incorporated. Continued community involvement with improvements to the Urban Forestry Manual facilitates better results and buy-in. Once this process is completed, staff will return to the Land Use/Sustainability/Resilience Committee for their review and recommendations before submitting to the City Council for review.

Urban Forestry and Sustainability:

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 \$583,441,000, the City’s urban forest provides value to the entire community.

Our Urban Forest’s environmental benefits stem from the sequestration of carbon by trees and from shading buildings that would otherwise rely more heavily on-air conditioning. In these ways, the Urban Forest removes excess carbon from the atmosphere while reducing our reliance on appliances powered by potentially fossil-fuel reliant energy generation. The City’s Green Action Plan (last updated 2012) envisioned a future in which 4,000 trees are planted annually within Riverside across public and private properties. The Climate Action Plan (adopted in 2017) sets targets to reduce the City’s carbon footprint and contains a distinct mitigation measure encouraging the planting of shade trees.

The recently adopted 2025 City Council Strategic Plan contains the following Environmental Stewardship actions related to our Urban Forest:

1. Update urban forestry policies to select tree species that maximize carbon sequestration and building energy reduction potential.

2. Boost green infrastructure citywide by planting trees in parks, public spaces, and private areas along with adding landscaping around buildings, green roofs and promoting healthy soils management, including compost applications.

Ongoing Actions Related to Urban Forestry:

In order to meet the objectives set forth within the Green Action Plan and Climate Action Plan, 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 2,000 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 the planting of 453 trees at a new urban farmland resource & training center.

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

FISCAL IMPACT:

There is no fiscal impact with receiving and filing this report.

Prepared by: Kris Martinez, Public Works Director
Certified as to
availability of funds: Edward Enriquez, Chief Financial Officer/Treasurer
Approved by: Rafael Guzman, Assistant City Manager
Approved as to form: Kristi Smith, Interim City Attorney

Attachment:

1. Presentation
2. Urban Forestry Policy Manual August 2015