



Park and Recreation Commission

City of Arts & Innovation

TO: PARK AND RECREATION COMMISSION DATE: FEBRUARY 2, 2026

FROM: PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT

SUBJECT: UPDATE ON THE URBAN FORESTRY POLICY MANUAL, UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE – FOREST SERVICE URBAN AND COMMUNITY FORESTRY INFLATION REDUCTION ACT GRANT AWARD, TREE PLANTINGS, REMOVALS AND TRIMMINGS FOR 2025

ISSUE:

Receive an update on the Urban Forestry Policy Manual and United States Department of Agriculture – Forest Service Urban and Community Forestry Inflation Reduction Act Grant Award, and Tree Plantings, Removals and Trimmings for 2025.

RECOMMENDATION:

That the Park and Recreation Commission receive and file an update on the Urban Forestry Policy Manual, the United States Department of Agriculture – Forest Service Urban and Community Forestry Inflation Reduction Act Grant Award, and review tree plantings, removals and trimmings for 2025.

BACKGROUND:

The City of Riverside is known as a “City of Trees” and has been designated 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 preserve and protect our City’s tree heritage and urban forest by providing guidelines for the planting, pruning, preservation, and removal of all trees located within the City right-of-way. The Manual is based on specifications established by the International Society of Arboriculture (ISA), the National Arborists Association (NAA), and the American National Standards Institute (ANSI).

DISCUSSION:

Urban Forestry Policy Manual & Related Procedures

On May 8, 2023, staff provided a progress update on the Manual to the Commission to provide any further modifications and recommend that the City Council approve the Manual. The Commission unanimously approved the Manual with no further modifications and recommended that Council approve the Manual.

On October 10, 2023, the City Attorney's Office (CAO) provided a workshop to the City Council on an Overview of Legal Analysis for Sidewalks and Trees. In the workshop, the CAO provided an overview of the claims process, including methods to evaluate who owns the land where trees are planted or on which sidewalks are located to determine who legally owns a tree or sidewalk.

City Council discussed and then requested that the CAO present this item to the Land Use, Sustainability, and Resilience Committee for further review. The CAO provided a workshop to the Committee for further review and discussion on December 11, 2023. The Committee recommended that there be further educational community outreach on the subject.

On February 06, 2024, the City Council unanimously approved the updated Manual.

The City's tree program continues to evolve, and staff are currently working on the following updates:

1. Staff are working to refine the recently adopted standard operating procedures for tree removals and will make modifications, as needed, while ensuring the core objective of transparency and communication is met.
2. Staff are researching options on the most effective method on hosting a Perpetual Tree Care and Planting Fund to pursue and secure additional funding to assist with the long-term care of the urban forest.
3. Staff continually review the Manual and consider revisions to ensure the document reflects our current best practices.

United States Department of Agriculture – Forest Service Grant Award

On June 1, 2023, the City of Riverside Public Works Department submitted a grant proposal to the United States Department of Agriculture – Forest Service to create a city-wide tree inventory and canopy assessment, development of a tree management database, completion of an urban forest management plan, planting 1,500 trees, and a suite of outreach and educational activities to support these efforts. A total of \$8,314,439.55 in federal funding was requested for the City of Riverside's Community and Urban Forest Resilience Project.

On September 14, 2023, the Public Works Department received notification from the USDA-FS that we were awarded \$1 million. This was a highly competitive grant process and Public Works received one of 43 awards made to entities in California. The grant requires a 50% local agency match which may include allowable and allocable in-kind contributions (i.e., personnel salary, fringe, and indirect costs; services, materials, supplies, equipment donations; and volunteer assistance), and private and public (non-federal) monetary contributions.

Following notification of the award, staff met with USDA-FS grant administrators to discuss a revised project narrative and budget based on the awarded amount. The narrative was modified to include creating a comprehensive tree inventory and an in-house database/inventory management system during the grant's five-year performance period with a budget of \$1,000,000 from the USDA-FS grant and in-kind match of City funds in the amount of \$1,000,000, for a total project cost of \$2,000,000.

The original grant application, which requested approximately \$8.3 million in federal funding, included completion of an urban forest management plan and the planting of 1,500 trees; these features were omitted from the revised narrative in order to stay within the awarded amount but will be included in applications for future grant opportunities. Additionally, Public Works will

leverage its existing tree planting budget to add new trees in communities lacking shade trees across the city and help build the urban forest.

On December 17, 2024, Request for Proposal (RFP) No. 2432 for Cloud-Hosted Urban Forestry Inventory and Maintenance Tracking Software Program was posted on the City's online bidding system, Planet Bids, seeking prospective bidders. On January 30, 2025, the City received 2 proposals in response to the RFP. One of the proposals received was deemed non-responsive by the Purchasing Department due to submitting an incomplete proposal.

On October 21, 2025, the City Council voted to award the contract to PlanIT Geo, Inc., a software and services company specializing in urban forestry, arboriculture, software development, management planning, GIS, and urban tree canopy assessments. Since that time, City staff have held meetings with PlanIT Geo to initiate the development and ongoing maintenance of a cloud-based urban forestry inventory and maintenance tracking software program, which will support more efficient data management, tracking, and long-term planning of the City's urban forest. Staff will work to engage the community throughout the process to ensure neighborhood & residents' needs are represented in the process.

Ongoing Actions Related to Urban Forestry

To meet the objectives set forth within the City's planning documents, staff have worked diligently to bring additional resources to the City's Urban Forestry efforts:

1. The awarded "CaliforniansforAll" Grant includes funding for Youth Fellows that are being assigned to the City of Riverside Public Works Department, Urban Forestry and Landscaping Division, to assist with the implementation of the cloud-based urban forestry inventory.
2. The Urban Forestry & Landscaping Division achieved full staffing in 2025, strengthening efforts to maintain a healthier urban ecosystem throughout the City of Riverside.

Noteworthy Recent Endeavors Pertaining to the Urban Forest

1. The Public Works Department has partnered 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. Renovated seven medians across the City with enhanced landscaping
3. Replaced over 20 irrigation controllers with CalSense Smart Controllers
4. Collaborated with Victoria Avenue Forever to plant over 75 trees and over 1,000 Ragged Robin roses and other shrubs
5. Planted 14,453 flowers across various beautification efforts (estimated to exceed 15,000 in 2025 at the time of this report writing)

2025 Plantings, Removals and Trimmings

1. Planted 423 Trees
2. Removed 373 Trees
3. Trimmed 13,608 Street Trees
4. Utility Line Clearance Trims: 22,095

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.

FISCAL IMPACT:

There is no fiscal impact associated with this report.

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Certified as to
availability of funds: Julie Nemes, Interim Finance Director
Approved by: Kris Martinez, Assistant City Manager
Approved as to form: Rebecca McKee-Reimbold, Interim City Attorney

Attachments:

1. Standard Operating Procedure for Tree Removals
2. Street Tree Plantings 2025
3. Street Tree Removals 2025
4. Street Tree Trimmings 2025
5. Presentation