



Park and Recreation Commission

City of Arts & Innovation

TO: PARK AND RECREATION COMMISSION DATE: SEPTEMBER 16, 2024

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 2024

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, Tree Plantings, Removals and Trimmings for 2024.

RECOMMENDATION:

That the Park and Recreation Commission receive and file an 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 2024.

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 preserve and protect our tree heritage and the Urban Forest of Riverside by providing guidelines for the planting, pruning, preservation and removal of all trees in City right-of-way based on specifications established by the International Society of Arboriculture (ISA), the National Arborists Association (NAA), and the American National Standards Institute (ANSI).

On January 9, 2023, staff provided a progress update on the Manual to the Land Use, Sustainability, and Resilience Committee (Committee) for feedback and to allow additional time to continue working on the updates. The Committee received the report, approved additional time to continue working on the updates, and requested the following items be considered:

1. Update the branding of the Manual so it has a City of Riverside look and is consistent with City branding;
2. Provide a clear method for notification to the community about tree removals;

3. Provide options relative to a Perpetual Tree Care and Planting Fund for the City of Riverside; and
4. Bring updates to the Committee on the Manual periodically.

DISCUSSION:

Urban Forestry Policy Manual

On March 3, 2023, an updated draft of the Manual was received from the Office of the City Manager, Office of Communications Division. It incorporated the look of the city and is consistent with the branding of the city.

On March 13, 2023, a Standard Operating Procedure came into effect for tree removal. Anytime a tree is scheduled for removal that has not been deemed a hazard to public safety, the following will occur:

1. Personal notification is provided to the resident/property owner via telephone call, in-person, email, and/or text.
2. A door hanger is left at the door of the property/residence or mailed within one (1) working day.
3. An 18" x 24" removal notification sign is placed on or near the tree depending on the site location.
4. A Work Order will be created for removal within three (3) working days of the inspection.
5. Forty-eight (48) hours prior to removal, the tree removal contractor will provide a door hanger to the affected address advising of the tree removal.
6. Forty-eight hours (48) prior to removal, the tree removal contractor will place a No Parking sign on the tree.

Staff is evaluating the new standard operating procedure and will make modifications, as needed, while ensuring the core objective of transparency and communication is met.

Staff is currently 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.

Staff is committed to providing continuous updates on the Manual to the Committee and Parks and Recreation Commission as they come forward.

City staff conducted additional review of the Manual and made several other revisions to ensure the document reflects our current best practices.

On January 30, 2023, staff provided an update on the progress of the Manual to the Park and Recreation Commission. It was received and filed.

On May 8, 2023, staff provided a progress update on the Manual to the Committee to provide any further modifications and recommend that the City Council approve the Manual. The Committee 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 that CAO evaluates who owns the land where trees

are planted or on which sidewalks are located to determine who legally owns a tree or sidewalk. If the adjacent property owner owns the land in fee simple where a tree is planted, they legally own the tree. Civil Code Section 801 states that public right of way is an easement that grants limited use rights to nonowners of the land. Easement is not legal ownership, easement is a limited right, easement confers rights but not necessarily duty. Civil Code Section 829 states that fee ownership grants the owner of land in fee “the right to the surface and to everything permanently situated beneath or above it”. CAO also advised that there is a presumption that private property ownership extends to the center of the street. The Riverside Municipal Code (RMC) Sections 6.14.020 and 13.03.090 places the duty to maintain sidewalks, parkways, and trees therein on the adjacent property owners. The CAO also provided that even if the City voluntarily trims a tree or repairs a sidewalk that is legally owned by the adjacent property owners, Courts have held occasional maintenance does not establish “control” for liability purposes.

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 and to take it to City Council when the plan was ready.

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

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. TreePeople, a Southern California nonprofit, was designated as a key partner, along with numerous local organizations. The project prioritized the city’s disadvantaged neighborhoods to enhance their access to the urban forest and provide environmental justice.

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. All federal grant funds are to be matched at least equally dollar for dollar with non-federal 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 developing 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. The original grant application included completion of an urban forest management plan and the planting of 1,500 trees were omitted from the revised narrative in order to stay within the awarded amount. These efforts will be included in applications for future grant opportunities.

Over the next five-year grant performance period, the Public Works Department will work closely with other City departments such as Innovation & Technology (I.T.), Parks, Recreation, & Community Services, Public Utilities, and General Services to develop the look and functionality

of the database and determine what data to gather to reach the overarching objective of better management of all trees throughout the city's urban forest. In addition, there will be community engagement with civic organizations, non-profits, and neighborhood groups in disadvantaged areas to ensure they have a voice to help the community better understand and interact with our urban forest. This in turn will help to increase public education of the enormous benefits of our urban forest and the need to grow and maintain it for future generations. Additionally, Public Works will leverage its existing tree planting budget to add new trees in disadvantaged communities across the city and help build the urban forest.

The City's grant application was made successful by the enormous support of the City Council and many City departments including the City Manager's Office, Riverside Public Utilities, Parks, Recreation & Community Services, Innovation & Technology, and General Services. In addition, letters of support were submitted with the grant application from the Inland Empire Community Foundation, the Riverwalk Community, Victoria Avenue Forever, and the Rivers and Lands Conservancy.

Ongoing Actions Related to Urban Forestry

To meet the objectives set forth within the City's planning documents, 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-way 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 the planting of 453 trees at a new urban farmland resource & training center.
5. The awarded 2022 CaliforniansforAll 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 planting as part of public roadway projects and requires that all participating development projects provide street trees.
3. An additional \$2,000,000 was allocated through Measure Z funding to trim all City palms on a two-year cycle.
4. An additional \$250,000 was allocated through Measure Z funding to plant additional trees throughout the city.

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.

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 five 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 providing for additional methods of funding, such with the UDA-FS grant 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.” By updating the Urban Forestry Policy Manual through researching and implementing current improved methods in the industry that will better enhance the long-term care of our urban forest, provides proof that the City of Riverside and the Public Works Department, are 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: Robert Filiar, Urban Forestry Manager
Approved by: Gilbert Hernandez, Public Works Director

Attachments:

1. 2024 Urban Forestry Policy Manual
2. Standard Operating Procedure for Tree Removals
3. Street Tree Plantings 2024
4. Street Tree Removals 2024
5. Street Tree Trimmings 2024
6. Presentation