

**DEPARTMENT OF FORESTRY AND FIRE PROTECTION**

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December 6, 2021

Helen Chapman, Policy and Legislative Advisor

Office of Sergio Jimenez | City of San José, District 2
200 E. Santa Clara St. T-18 | San José, CA 95113

Dear Helen Chapman,

Per your request I am offering my perspective, as the appointed representative of CAL FIRE, on the San Jose Community Forest Management Plan (CFMP). I am not going to provide a comprehensive list of omissions or suggested corrections because it would be counterproductive to the significant efforts invested thus far. CAL FIRE has previously provided corrections pertinent to the Urban and Community Forestry Grant agreement which have been responded to by City staff. I will offer my general impressions and recommendations as City Council considers adoption of the CFMP.

Community input and engagement are important to creation of a viable plan, but even more to its implementation and refinement over time. Establishment of the Community Forest Advisory Committee should be one of the highest priority objectives. This action will continue ongoing conversations between stakeholders and the City, concurrent with action on other objectives. The CFMP should be a living document where actions are responsive to addressing issues as quickly as possible, yet adaptive to reality. Stakeholders will always be influential to success.

Interdepartmental coordination and unified policies are needed for urban forestry governance, projects, services and activities, best practices, data analysis, and other subjects. Consistent and transparent decisions by qualified professionals should be supported by the best available information. Consider a policy of no net loss of canopy to apply broadly so that progress is made toward canopy cover goals. Maintain accountability by providing annual progress updates about the CFMP.

Partner with entities and organizations that will complement implementation. CAL FIRE is willing to provide technical assistance, impartial assessment, and feedback, as well as grant opportunities (as funding is available). Others have assistance to provide also.

Consider the CFMP a starting point. Work with stakeholders to refine the plan while acting on priority issues. Invest to the extent possible to reverse historic trends of declining canopy cover and inadequate maintenance.

I encourage City Council to adopt the CFMP, direct staff to return with budget and staffing requests, identify future policies and best practices to consider, and establish a recurring dialog with stakeholders. Please contact me if I can assist you,

Walter Passmore, State Urban Forester
CAL FIRE

COALITION TO ADVANCE URBAN FORESTRY IN SAN JOSÉ

January 20, 2022

San José Mayor and City Council
City of San José
200 E. Santa Clara Street
San José, CA 95113

Dear Honorable Mayor and City Council:

The Draft Community Forest Management Plan coming before you on January 25 remains shockingly deficient. Despite hundreds of written concerns and conversations with council member offices and city staff, errors and omissions persist, and this draft is not even close to a plan. A [front page article](#) in the January 10 Mercury News makes the depth of San Jose's urban forest crisis painfully clear. Now it's up to you, the Mayor and Council, to shift course on how San José can better grow, manage, and protect its urban forest.

The draft report could be accepted as an initial study, but first, inconsistencies must be corrected. Then council members can outline what additional information is needed before considering any real plan - particularly data on city tree spending and a substantiated analysis of why the tree canopy is vanishing. Planting trees is important, as always, but it is not the solution. San José must look deep within to stop the bleeding.

Here are three key areas that need improvement:

1. **Missing financial data.** Increased mitigation fees and revenue from assessment districts are important revenue sources not discussed. In addition, the draft states residents have been responsible for all street tree care since 1951, yet S.J. had a citywide street tree pruning and trimming program until 2008. To consider viable tree management options and offer recommendations, such data is essential.
2. **Inadequate scope.** The grant from Cal Fire that funded this plan stipulated that it cover 100% of San Jose's existing and potential tree canopy yet the draft focuses almost exclusively on the 15% or less managed by the city. The remaining 85% is owned privately or by public agencies or districts. There is no discussion or analysis of broader best-practice policies such as a no net loss standard, increasing native trees per the 2040 General Plan, or what policies and laws are needed to curtail removals.
3. **Stewardship.** Cities with successful urban forest programs have independent Tree Commissions of stakeholders. Staff recommends instead a weak advisory committee appointed and managed internally by DOT, whose primary purpose is roads and transportation. Ideally the tree program should be moved to Environmental Services or another department with a compatible mission. Even then, a Tree Commission with a direct line to Council is the way to provide guardianship for our trees because it allows for unbiased review and recommendations around city policies, programs, and spending.

We know you understand the cooling power of mature trees as the climate warms, but you need more and better information to make educated choices on how to turn the tide that is destroying our trees. Please seek that information, and don't move forward with a plan until you have it.

Sincerely,

Coalition to Advance Urban Forestry in San José

Linda J. LeZotte

Director, Valley Water and Former City of San José Councilmember

Vicki Moore

Chair, Santa Clara County Planning Commission

Barbara Marshman

San Jose Mercury News Former Editorial Page Editor

Rita Norton

Former Chair, SCVWD Environmental Advisory Committee

Bob Levy

Vice-Chair, Santa Clara County Planning Commission; former San Jose Planning Commissioner

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Chair, Conservation Committee, Loma Prieta Chapter, Sierra Club

Fernando R. Zazueta

La Raza Historical Society of Santa Clara Valley

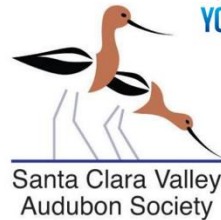
Deb Kramer
Executive Director, Keep Coyote Creek Beautiful

Terry Trumbull,
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Elizabeth Sarmiento
Board of Directors, Smart Yards Education

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Coordinator, Silicon Valley Youth Climate Action

Jennifer Thompson
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CALIFORNIA NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY



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**SAN JOSE DOWNTOWN
ASSOCIATION**

June 30, 2021

Russell Hansen
City Arborist
City of San Jose Department of Transportation
200 East Santa Clara Street
San Jose, CA 95113

RE: Feedback and Comments for Community Forest Management Plan Draft

Dear Russell Hansen,

We commend City staff for their work on the Community Forest Management Plan Draft and look forward to working with staff as a partner on the management of downtown San Jose's urban canopy when the plan is finalized. We have reviewed the Community Forest Management Plan (CFMP) and have provided feedback in the following areas: design review and approval for development projects, grant funding, challenges with property owner maintained trees, and tree planting.

Design Review and Approval for Development Project

For development projects, there needs to be more consistency and clarity on what the arborists' recommendations are, how they are accepted and implemented as part of the process. The recommendation should be shared at a consistent point in the Public Works process, not at Public Works' discretion as to when to reveal the recommendations. Arborists need to be embedded throughout the process so that developers are aware of their recommendations at the onset of development and not merely at the end. When conditions change and arborists are required to change recommendations, this should transpire prior to the end of the development process as it can cause confusion and costly additional line items for developers. For example, new requirements from Public Works for new tree well sizes that were not recommended prior can be enforced at the end of development, which can be unfair for developers to accommodate. Developers are better able to accommodate tree requirements in the beginning stages or when notified during the review and approval process.

For the term "arborist", there needs to be clarification on what qualifies a standard arborist. When the City asks for a qualified arborist to help make a decision related to development, the qualifications need to be specified. Are there City standards or are these standards defined by the International Society of Arboriculture? Additionally, is certification requested by City staff and is this certification updated on set cadence? This would provide developers with clarity.

Grant Funding

We commend City staff for seeking grants and other funding opportunities as the need to pursue grant funding for tree care as defined in the plan's findings. The cost to maintain the urban forest is high, which necessitates service innovations and partnerships to offset the financial burden.

We recommend exploring additional opportunities including: leveraging existing City programs that provide needed human capital, future partnerships, internships, and private sector grants. Could an educational workforce be created and dedicated to urban forest management?

Challenges with Property Owner Maintained Trees

In San Jose, there is a lack of public knowledge that City municipal code dictates property owners must maintain the street tree adjacent to their property. We recommend closing this awareness gap by leveraging existing and potential partnerships to spread the word. Collaborating with business districts and business associations would be a fruitful partnership. Additionally, we recommend the City look at new partnerships with area nonprofits focused on environmental stewardship to disseminate information and increase urban forestry education.

There is a need to inform property owners with consistent messaging. We recommend creating a timeline for automated messaging for tree care maintenance. This could include automated emails, mailers, and automated phone calls.

Is it possible for there to be incentives to care for trees, stipends for costs of water use, and stipends for property owners' time? We also recommend creating programs that build-off existing or new utility company incentives or carbon offset incentives.

The City's tree pruning cycle is defined in the plan, but is there consideration in the pruning cycle in relation to increased droughts and climate change? Additionally, as new conditions or challenges arise, how will the plan respond to those changes?

Tree Planting

Tree planting partnerships should be clearly defined as there is an opportunity to pursue and leverage new partnerships for funding such as federal, state, local, and private funding. Utility companies, such as San Jose Water Co. and PG&E, can also be another source for funding regarding tree plantings.

We are aware that trees require lots of care after they are planted. We recommend exploring leveraging civic-based or volunteer-based opportunities to provide more ongoing tree care.

SJDA generally agrees with the 2040 General Plan; we appreciate that the Community Forest Management Plan aligns with existing city plans.

Sincerely,



Chloe Shipp
Director of Public Space Operations

cc:
John Ristow, Department of Transportation Director
Eric Hon, Division Manager, Department of Transportation
Ryan Allen