



# Memorandum

**TO:** TRANSPORTATION AND ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

**FROM:** John Ristow

**SUBJECT:** Community Forest Management Plan and Urban Forestry Annual Report

**DATE:** May 18, 2026

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Approved

Date:

5/26/2026

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## **RECOMMENDATION**

Accept the annual report on the Community Forest Management Plan and Urban Forestry and the impact on advancing urban forestry goals and increasing the tree canopy.

## **BACKGROUND**

The adoption of the Community Forest Management Plan in February of 2022 created a strategic direction for the City's Forestry program. The plan and heightened community interest have provided an opportunity for the City to expand its urban forestry capacity. The plan provides direction for how the community forest could be improved and maintained into the future. The plan includes fifteen strategies organized into five key themes for building a robust urban forestry program that includes:

- Streamlining governance;
- Ensuring the sustainability of the urban forest;
- Support for diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging;
- Efficient and effective tree management; and
- Standardization of planning and development practices.

Each of these themes has multiple strategies and objectives to guide the Forestry program moving forward and the City has made progress in 35% of the objectives outlined in the plan (Attachment A). This memorandum highlights the progress achieved in Fiscal Year 2025-2026.

## **ANALYSIS**

### **Ensuring the sustainability of the urban forest**

To ensure the sustainability of the urban forest, 22 objectives have been met or are in progress in three of the five themes in FY 2025/2026. Most notably, an approved street tree species planting list was created with attention paid to replacing inappropriate species, maintenance of public trees, and creating spaces where trees can thrive. The City considered climate change, including evaluating the ability of species to thrive both in the current climate and the climate that San José is expected to have thirty years from now. The list was also vetted by industry professionals and is arranged by the mature size of the trees (See Attachment B). Grouping by size helps developers ensure they design and build infrastructure sized appropriately for the trees selected for their projects as required by the Citywide Design Standards and Guidelines. This also helps ensure tree selections made for existing planting locations are less impactful to surrounding sidewalks and curbs

Planting new trees helps improve the health of the urban forest by ensuring the overall tree canopy is maintained and grows. The City's annual goal is to plant at least 2,000 trees each fiscal year. The Department of Transportation set a goal this fiscal year of planting 1,500 new trees on City property. This goal has been met, and the Parks Recreation and Neighborhood Services Department has planted an additional 513 new park trees. The tree planting total of the two departments combined at the time of this writing is 2,013 trees, which exceeds the annual tree planting goal.

Regular tree maintenance ensures the longevity of the tree canopy. The current goal is to maintain all the public trees in the Department of Transportation jurisdiction on a twelve-year cycle. In FY 2025-2026, 4,100 trees were pruned, which represents an accelerated pace of each tree being maintained once every eleven years.

### **Support for diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging**

The City is offering free street trees to be planted for all property owners through the Free Street Tree Planting Program, launched in January 2026. Funding provided by the federal government under the Inflation Reduction Act allows the City to provide watering and pruning support for newly planted street trees in 78 census tracts that align with the highest scores from CalEnviroScreen. For more information and to submit an application for a free tree, residents can visit <https://www.sanjoseca.gov/your-government/departments-offices/transportation/landscaping/forestry/free-street-tree-planting-program>.

San José has a wide variety of cultures and languages. To ensure everyone has access to Forestry's programs, print materials are published in the five most spoken languages in the City, including English, Spanish, Vietnamese, Traditional Chinese, and Simplified

Chinese. Additionally, materials have been updated to have a consistent design and be easily understood (Attachment C). To further the inclusion goal, social media posts and newsletter articles have been drafted for City Councilmembers and partners to share with the public through newsletters and other vehicles. As the Forestry Team conducts outreach, having assistance from city council offices and partner organizations will be important to raise awareness as broadly as possible.

Some community members are hesitant to interact with government programs. The City's long-term partnership with non-profit organization Our City Forest helps overcome that hesitancy because Our City Forest can meet community members where they are. Our City Forest continues to engage community members across the City, and in FY 2025-2026, Our City Forest provided meaningful engagement through 57 tree-related events attended by 2,500 volunteers. In addition, Our City Forest has operated the nation's premier AmeriCorps workforce development program focused on urban forestry, through which it has provided workforce training for more than eighteen years to generations of environmental stewards and community leaders. This program further increases the number of local youth from all over San José engaged in their community.

### **Efficient and effective tree management**

To effectively manage an urban forest, it must be monitored. In 2024, the invasive shot hole borer was identified in the City of San José. These invasive beetles carry a fungus that can kill one in every five of San Jose's trees. The Forestry Team has continued to inspect trees that may be infested by the invasive shot hole borer and has seen the infestation spreading at a slow rate (See Attachment D). To date, nine highly infested street trees have been removed, and 80 street trees are being treated to reduce the number of insects that can spread. The Forestry Team continues to engage with the California Natural Resources Agency and the University of California for the most current information about the pest and its management.

One of the Community Forest Management Plan objectives that is continuously being worked on is educating owners of properties about proper tree care. Neighborhood groups have been engaging with the City for guidance on managing their private property trees that are susceptible to invasive shot hole borer. This neighbor-to-neighbor engagement will be an integral part of effectively managing the pest. These early efforts serve as example for how other groups can expand on the neighbor-to-neighbor concept

### **Conclusion**

Since the adoption of the Community Forest Management Plan in 2022, continuous progress has been made toward preserving and restoring the City's tree canopy. Looking to the future, the City will continue to meet the goal of planting 2,000 new trees, promote the role trees play in the community, and be committed to encouraging sustainable landscapes within new building developments.

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## **COORDINATION**

This memorandum was coordinated with the City Attorney's Office, the Budget Office, and the Parks Recreation and Neighborhood Services Department,

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## **ATTACHMENTS**

Attachment A – Community Forest Management Plan Strategic Work Plan

Attachment B – Tree Species List

Attachment C – Example Print Material

Attachment D – Invasive Shot Hole Borer Infestation Map