



CITY OF LOS ANGELES
CALIFORNIA

**Palms Neighborhood
Council
Green Committee**

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PALMS NEIGHBORHOOD COUNCIL

**Joint Board and Green Committee Meeting Agenda
Tuesday April 13th – 6:00 p.m.**

Zoom Meeting Online at: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/91829897506>

**Or via telephone by calling: 1(669)900-6833, enter Meeting ID: 918 2989 7506 & press #
For public comment via telephone press *9**

The Neighborhood Council system enables meaningful civic participation for all Angelenos and serves as a voice for improving government responsiveness to local communities and their needs. We are an advisory body to the City of Los Angeles, comprised of stakeholder volunteers who are devoted to the mission of improving our communities.,

- I. **CALL TO ORDER & ROLL CALL**
- II. **ANNOUNCEMENTS**
 - a. Call for Green Committee Members
 - b. [New Committee Community Standards and Ground Rules](#)
- III. **INTRODUCTIONS (10 Minutes)**
- IV. **GENERAL PUBLIC COMMENT (5 minutes)**
- V. **COMMITTEE UPDATES (10 minutes)**
 - a. NC Green Biz
 - b. NCSA
 - **MOTION:** To approve the following CIS: Los Angeles City Council has adopted several policy objectives that relate to public infrastructure, including the Mobility Plan 2035, the City's goal to eliminate traffic fatalities, the City's goal to eliminate greenhouse gas emissions from transportation, and the City's goal to more equitably deliver services. The Capital Improvement Expenditure Plan should reflect these policy objectives and serve as a roadmap for how City departments like the Los Angeles Department of Transportation (LADOT) and the Los Angeles Public Works Department (DPW) coordinate to achieve these outcomes. THEREFORE, the Palms Neighborhood Council SUPPORTS [CF #21-0039](#), and urges the City to move forward in the implementation of a multi year Capital Improvement Expenditure Plan. The plan should assess infrastructure conditions and needs across the City, take into account our current planning documents and reports (including the Mobility Plan 2035),

and align current and future funding across city departments - including LADOT and DPW - to address them. It should also prioritize equity, particularly for low-income and communities of color. The Palms Neighborhood Council urges the City to lead this discussion with policy committees, including Transportation and Public Works, to ensure that the multi year Capital Improvement Expenditure Plan is informed by the City Council's stated policy objectives like Vision Zero, equity, and sustainability.

- c. Tree planting initiatives
 - Announcements
 1. Rachel Malarich Lunch and Learn 4/14/21
 2. Next CFAC Meeting 5/6/21 at 1 PM
 3. Streets LA Tree Summit 5/21/21 9:30 AM - 12 PM
 - CA Climate Action Corps Presentation - Bryce Lewis-Smith
 - **MOTION:** To support the Urban Forestry Budget Investment Letter to the Board of Public Works (see supplementals)
 - Recently Planted Trees in Palms
 1. Social Media Plans
 2. Discussion of Door Hangers for Neighbors
- d. Dog Waste stations
 - **FUNDING MOTION:** To approve \$20 for [rust spray](#)
- e. Kids Recycled Art Projects
- f. Jamiah's ([Crop Swap](#)) vertical gardens (post photos).
<https://photos.app.goo.gl/3xssM2G9b5fpFikS6>
- g. Project coordination with Girl Scouts
- h. Power Lines on Overland Ave
- i. Citizen Science Programs
 - Water Trust Education
 - LADWP Green Power Program
 - Share [Mayor's Green New Deal](#) Toolkit

VI. NEW PROJECTS/BUSINESS (30 MIN)

- a. Water Equity Survey from Tree People
- b. Earth Day Planning
- c. Stand LA Phase Out Urban Oil Drilling Petition:
<https://actionnetwork.org/petitions/protect-la-residents-health-and-safety-not-oil-industry-interests?source=email&>

VII. RECAP OF NEXT STEPS AND TIMELINE (10 min)

VIII. Adjournment:

Time allocations for agenda items are approximate and may be shortened or lengthened at the discretion of the President. Public comment will be taken for each motion as well as for any item in the consent agenda prior to Board action. The public is requested to fill out a "Speaker Card" to address the Assembly on any item of the agenda prior to the Assembly taking action on an item. Comments from the public on Agenda items will be heard only when the respective item is being considered. Comments from the public on other matters not appearing on the Agenda that is within the Assembly's subject matter jurisdiction will be heard during the Public Comment period. Public comment is limited to 1 to 2 minutes per speaker, at the discretion or unless waived by the Assembly. In the interest of addressing all items on the agenda, time limits for individual comments and discussion may be set at the discretion of the President. All items on the consent agenda will be determined by a single Committee vote and without Committee discussion. Committee members may request that any item be removed from the consent agenda and considered individually at any time prior to that vote.

Per Board of Neighborhood Commissioners Policy #2014-01, agendas are posted for public review at: 1) Woodbine Park Kiosk, 3409 S. Vinton Ave.; 2) Palms Neighborhood Council website, www.palmsnc.la

In compliance with Government Code section 54957.5, non-exempt writings that are distributed to a majority or all of the board in advance of a meeting may be viewed at Woodbine Park Kiosk, 3409 S. Vinton Ave, at our website: www.palmsla.org or at the scheduled meeting. In addition, if you would like a copy of any record related to an item on the agenda, please contact the Secretary at secretary@palmsnc.la

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SI REQUIERE SERVICIOS DE TRADUCCION, FAVOR DE NOTIFICAR A LA OFICINA 3 DIAS DE TRABAJO (72 HORAS) ANTES DEL EVENTO. SI NECESITA ASISTENCIA CON ESTA NOTIFICACION, POR FAVOR LLAME A NUESTRA OFICINA AL secretary@palmsnc.la



March 22, 2021

To the Board of Public Works:

Recommendation: Receive and file this letter, and forward to the Mayor’s Office of Budget and Innovation.

The City’s Community Forest Advisory Committee (CFAC) was formed in 1993 to improve the state of our City’s urban forest by convening community representatives from the 15 council districts and a Mayor’s representative. Committee members are chosen by their councilmember and appointed by the Mayor to advise the City on practices and policies, and advocate on behalf of our urban forest. It is in this capacity that we offer you our request regarding the urban forestry budget.

CFAC strongly believes that an investment in our urban forest will contribute toward advancing the Mayor’s climate, sustainability, biodiversity, and equity goals as set in the Green New Deal. We were extremely heartened to hear the Mayor accurately declare in a February meeting: “let me make something clear: even in the midst of this crisis, nothing is more important than the air we breathe, nothing is more central than the environment we sustain, and nothing is more critical to our vision for LA than securing a bright and healthy future for the next generation. That is why we will continue our mission even in the toughest times to maintain and expand our urban forest.”

CFAC urges you to recognize trees as an unsurpassed bargain in our City’s infrastructure: trees remove dust from the air, create windbreaks, capture runoff, muffle urban noise, mitigate air pollution, reduce energy costs, provide much needed shade and ambient cooling, sequester carbon, capture and clean stormwater, support biodiversity, improve public health and wellbeing, and even reduce crime. In California, every \$1 invested in a street tree returns \$5.82 in benefits¹. But if we reduce or defer the care trees require, we will incur otherwise avoidable expenses and liabilities as trees decline and experience early failure and mortality from that lack of care. As an example, emergency response work costs 2.5 times more per tree than proactive trimming. Additionally, greater emphasis on proactive maintenance can also help mitigate liabilities. Over the past three years, the City has paid an average of \$2.5 million a year on tree-related legal settlements.²

¹ McPherson, E. Gregory, Natalie van Doorn, and John de Goede. 2016. Structure, Function, and Values of Street Trees in California, USA. *Urban Forestry & Urban 17*: April 2016. Pp 104 – 115. https://www.fs.fed.us/psw/publications/mcpherson/psw_2016_mcpherson004.pdf

² Galperin, Ron. *LA’s Tree Trimming and Maintenance Program*. 2019. <https://lacontroller.org/audits-and-reports/turning-over-a-new-leaf-l-a-s-tree-trimming-and-maintenance-program/>

Unlike built City infrastructure, the maintenance needs of the living trees of our municipal green infrastructure cannot be postponed to a future, more financially secure date. *The damage we do today to our urban forest will be with us forever*. And to quote the City’s Forest Office, Rachel Malarich: “this is the only infrastructure that gains value with time.”

Our Ask: CFAC therefore urges you to increase the budget for the Urban Forestry Division in 2021-2022 from .25% to 1% of the total city budget, recognize this budget as essential to public health, and protect it from cuts going forward. We also urge the approval of an ecologist/biologist staff member for the Office of Forest Management so that the UFMP, Strengthening Protected Tree policies, and creating BMP’s for mature tree maintenance be realized with greater urgency.

We urge you to heed the expert analysis and recommendations in the study the City commissioned from Dudek: *First Step — Developing An Urban Forest Management Plan for the City of Los Angeles*³. The City, with aid from grants, spent \$150,000 on this report, and its accuracy and value were acknowledged by all.

As you consider the Urban Forestry Division’s budget, please keep in mind the Dudek Report’s following points:

- The Report compared several cities’ urban forestry budgets to that of Los Angeles, and found that “an estimated budget increase of \$40–\$50 million is needed to manage the urban forest at a sustainable level. *The City’s annual per-tree urban forestry budget of approximately \$27 is 140% to 212% less than what comparable cities invest in their urban forest trees each year.*” (Dudek, p. 15).
- The Dudek Report’s “wake-up call” comparing Los Angeles’s budget practices with those of other cities was amplified by a 2018 comparative study of several cities’ urban forestry budgets that found that cities typically allot 1% of their entire budget to the urban forest. By contrast, UFD’s budget in Los Angeles is around 0.25% of the City budget, a fraction of what it is in other progressive cities.⁴
- The budget cuts to the Urban Forestry Division during the Great Recession of 2008 resulted in citywide tree neglect and damage, from which we still have not recovered. The cuts “also resulted in many dead standing trees that were not removed in reasonable time frames, increasing hazardous conditions and resulting in upward trending tree-related settlements” (Dudek, p. 17).

³ Dudek. *First Step: Developing an Urban Forest Management Plan for the City of Los Angeles*. CityPlants, 2018, https://www.cityplants.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/10939_LA-City-Plants_FirstStep_Report_FINAL.pdf

⁴ Stewart, Jill, and Ileana Wachtel. 2018. *L.A.’s Urban Tree Canopy needs a Better Plan*.

Suggestions for revenue generation: with consideration of the City’s current fiscal state, in order to meet the goals of the Green New Deal, and in order to prepare our City for the 2028 Olympics, we offer the following suggestions and potential methods to generate additional funding for Urban Forestry programs and improve maintenance/preservation of our trees:

1. Create a Landscape Maintenance Assessment in parallel to the Lighting Maintenance Assessment Districts in order to generate a consistent stream of funding for irrigation, trimming, and care of existing mature trees.
2. Create a Green Space funding mechanism akin to the Public Works Improvement Arts Program (PWIAP) and the Private Arts Development Fee (ADF) for all construction and development.
3. Increase the In Lieu Fee (aka the “Tree Guarantee Fee”), especially for residential parkway removals. When the In Lieu Fee was first introduced, tree advocates opposed the “gift” to developers of taxpayer funds to subsidize the fee charged when a developer chooses to remove a City tree. During a time of widespread financial suffering in the community, continuing to gift taxpayer dollars to wealthy speculative developers to destroy extremely valuable, desperately needed municipal green infrastructure seems ill-advised. The fee should also include the cost of the 5 years of irrigation and maintenance needed to establish a newly planted sapling. (Five years is the industry-accepted “establishment period” for a newly planted sapling.)
4. Release and redirect a portion of the City’s Special Funds toward StreetsLA, the City Forest Management office, and Urban Forestry (\$4 Billion in 700 funds as per a 2019 report by the City Controller, Ron Galperin).
5. Approve the replacement of the Chief Forester position, but with an Urban (Forest) Planner — an ISA (Int’l Society of Arboriculture) Certified Master Arborist, Municipal Specialist or Registered Consulting Arborist: someone with a biology/ecology background as well as urban planning experience who, informed by science and the most up-to-date arboriculture practices, can lead the Division with a skillset that aligns UFD’s practices with the City’s climate and biodiversity goals. As funding levels allow, add an ecologist and architect to assist with City Planning and LADBS reviews and redesigns.
6. Leverage funding from Measure W for designing biodiversity focused medians and continuous parkways designed for stormwater capture. Make these standard designs (LASAN already has some).
7. Coordinate better with other agencies (LASAN, BOE, Planning, Metro, Caltrans) on their capital projects to leverage funding and create multi-benefit, tree-inclusive projects.
8. Publish the CAO’s study which demonstrated the financial superiority of preserving a street tree vs. removing it and planting a replacement sapling.

9. Instruct the City Attorney's office to strengthen policies and increase fines for illegal street tree pruning, illegal tree removals, and damage to trees during construction.
10. Raise inspection fees charged for services from the Urban Forestry Division to cover the actual costs incurred. The current fee structure is outdated and does not accurately reflect staff time expenditure. E.g. institute full cost recovery for tree obstruction and overgrown vegetation requests.
11. Raise the Tree Removal Permit fees to reflect the monetary value of the ecosystem services that are being provided and that will be lost over the future projected lifetime of the tree when the tree is removed. Increase fees exponentially for Protected Tree species based on trunk diameter (DBH) and canopy size.
12. Raise the bond fees developers currently pay the City to ensure the survival of "replacement" trees, and extend the bond period from 3 years to 5 years (the industry-accepted "establishment period" for a newly planted sapling). Ensure that the cost of staff time to inspect those trees is not only fully recouped, but increased to discourage neglect or removal.
13. Set a high fee schedule for removal of private property trees which are routinely removed by developers at time of demolition without any consideration of loss of canopy and ecosystem services. Double the fee (or more) if removed illegally to incentivize proper procedure: e.g., \$10,000 minimum to remove; \$25,000 if removed illegally. Simultaneously instruct City Planning & LADBS to require an inventory of all green cover and trees on site at the beginning of the permit process (require an aerial photo dated prior to purchase date, so razing of parcels cannot be performed preemptively before permit applications, a current common practice).
14. Although City Council specifically asked for funding for alternatives to tree removals in the Sidewalk Repair Program, BOE says they are not available. We are losing valuable trees that could be saved with ramping, meandering sidewalks, and bump outs. Instruct BOE to find ways in which access and rebate requests can reward residents who preserve their parkway trees, especially since it's a 30 year program. Leverage NC funding for alternative designs.
15. Instruct the Department of City Planning (DCP) and LADBS to establish and require Tree & Root Protection Zones for street trees adjacent to construction projects; require inspections at the start and end of construction; and introduce a fee to cover staff time. Currently, our valuable mature street trees are being damaged or destroyed by the parking of heavy equipment and storage of materials around trees during construction projects.
16. Require a small percentage of "tree care, research, and maintenance" funding from each department or agency in the City that touches trees, such as Community Planning, Project Planning, ADU Planning, HUD, Housing, LADWP, Building and Safety, etc. This may encourage a broader sense of investment across departments in the City's urban forest.

Past experience has shown budget cuts to the City's urban forestry programs during times of fiscal stress to be not only a false economy, but a recipe for significant future costs through the loss of and irreparable damage to our highly valuable green infrastructure, and damage settlements from tree-related claims.

Lessons learned from the disastrous consequences to our urban forest of the post-2008 recession budget cuts can profitably guide your decisions as you consider the next urban forestry budget. We, CFAC are poised and happy to help with your decision making.

Respectfully,

Shelley
BillikChair
Community Forest Advisory Committee

CFAC has written a letter that is more complete in its budget requests and suggests ways to increase revenue for Urban Forestry. These are some urgent talking points:

Funding for new Chief Forester –

With the new challenges in Los Angeles from climate change -- worsening droughts and heat island effect – there is a need to search for and better fund a more high-level Chief Forester armed with an environmental science background, who will enable trees' ecosystem services value, as well as their role in biodiversity, holistically inform day-to-day urban forestry practices.

Funding for Environmental Planner –

A position needs to be created in UFD for an Environmental Planner who has the expertise to advise developers and property owners anticipating construction projects with more environmentally conscious planning that preserves existing private property and street trees. Presently tree removal requests come to UFD and BPW at the end of projects when it is too late to change the design to accommodate trees, or preserve important wildlife woodlands. Earlier in the process, at the Planning Commission hearings, the Commissioners say trees are not their purview. Yet often a simple proposed driveway adjustment could have saved a tree, but there is no one involved early enough to make such a suggestion. In other cities this is the work of their Environmental Planner.

Increase Urban Forestry Division budget –

UFD is only allocated .25% of the City budget, as compared to other cities where the urban forestry budget is 1%. Yet every dollar spent on trees yields back \$5.82 in environmental services. UFD watering crews have been cut back, so new trees are not thriving. Pruning cycles are too long (currently 25 years!!), and since crews cannot return any time soon, there is fear of future liability with the result that important shade canopy is over-cut.

Sidewalk Repair Special Tree Considerations –

No funds exist in the SRP to come up with special hardscape solutions to save significant trees. Currently it takes public outcry, and budget maneuvers to get any special considerations. Instead, significant trees should, as a matter of practice, be given special approaches to retain valuable canopy, such as bump-outs or permeable pavements (which have only been experiments, not regular choices).

Also, there should be financial incentives available to property owners who allow sidewalks to meander on their property to save a tree.

Tree Education Program –

Many residents and property owners in Los Angeles do not fully comprehend the precious value of trees, tree canopy, and sensitive natural woodlands, and they do not understand the direct role of all of these to the health of the city's inhabitants. To discourage the unnecessary removal of private property trees, street trees, protected trees, and native woodlands, a city tree education campaign should be launched similar to the successful water-saving Save the Drop campaign, and this should be funded as soon as possible as our canopy is diminishing and our temperatures keep rising. New York and other cities have had great success with such campaigns.

