



May 5, 2021

Budget and Finance Committee, Los Angeles City Council
200 N Spring Street
Los Angeles, CA 90012

RE: Angelenos Need Equitable Urban Forest Canopy Now - Consideration of Mayor Garcetti's FY 2021-22 Proposed 'Justice Budget' for Urban Forestry

Dear Chairman Krekorian and Budget and Finance Committee Members,

Thank you for your leadership and support for Los Angeles's urban forest! **A healthy urban forest is essential, green, and inclusive infrastructure** to a thriving, sustainable, and resilient city. Los Angeles's urban forest, if properly planned and managed, can protect Angelenos from many of the current and future impacts of climate change including saving lives from extreme heat, capturing and cleaning water, improving human health and wellbeing, and providing many other benefits. For example, a study found that for every \$1 spent on tree planting and maintenance, urban trees deliver \$5.82 in benefit in California (McPherson et al., 2016). However, the urban forest canopy is not equitably distributed in the City. According to the [Los Angeles County Tree Canopy Assessment](#), led by TreePeople and Loyola Marymount University, 18% of the City's tree canopy grows where less than 1% of the City's population lives. The newly published [Los Angeles Urban Forest Equity Assessment Report](#) found that funding is an overwhelmingly important component in addressing the historically under-resourced, inequitable distribution of the City's urban forest.

TreePeople is relieved that there is over \$6 million for tree planting, watering, and tree trimming to maintain our urban tree canopy in the proposed budget. **While this is a good downpayment, more targeted investments are needed to realize a true 'Justice Budget'.** To better plan, plant, and care for Los Angeles's urban forest to achieve climate benefits and environmental justice, we urge you to consider the following urban forestry budget items in the Mayor's 2021-22 Proposed 'Justice Budget':

- Building *critical* urban forestry capacity in the City by adding the following crews in the Urban Forestry Division under StreetsLA to better support the proposed tree planting and maintenance including:
 - Adding two *new* trimming crews
 - Adding at least one *new* tree care crew, especially for tree watering
 - Adding at least one *new* tree planting crew
- Adding *essential* support staff for the City Forest Officer to expedite improvements to and the coordination of urban forestry work in the City
- Maintaining current authorized positions in the Department of Recreation and Parks, including forestry and maintenance positions, by restoring *all* positions proposed for deletion associated with the Separation Incentive Program (SIP)

Looking ahead, we urge the City to prioritize the discussion and consideration of the following recommendations from the [Los Angeles Urban Forest Equity Assessment Report](#) to address persistent urban forestry equity issues facing the City's *frontline communities*:

- **Trees as inclusive infrastructure:** The City needs to further explore how to utilize trees as green and inclusive infrastructure for public health benefits, consider partnerships needed and potentially alternative measures of success for urban forestry projects (e.g., tree planting) that include meaningful community input and experience.
- **Equitable financing:** The City needs to consider how to ensure funding allocated for the urban forest achieves equitable outcomes rather than following traditional cost-benefit analyses.
- **Maintenance and co-ownership:** The City needs to develop effective models for tree establishment care, especially watering, that include community as an important partner.
- **Building multi-generational coalitions:** The City needs to invest in the next generation of urban foresters.
- **Reclaiming the Right-Of-Way:** The City needs to strategically invest in Right-Of-Way (ROW), develop incentive programs, and explore other mechanisms to increase tree canopy in historically marginalized areas and disadvantaged communities of color.

Thank you for your consideration. We look forward to working with you to confront the existential threat of climate change. Equitable investments now in the City's urban forestry canopy can tackle this existential threat -- putting the City on a pathway to achieving a greener, healthier, and more climate-resilient future for all Angelenos.

Respectfully,

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