



RE: CFAC CIS Communication Against Unless Amended:  
CF25-0962, CF25-0974, and CF25-1141  
Voted 11-6-2025 at CFAC

The Los Angeles Community Forest Advisory Committee (CFAC), in fulfillment of its mission to advise on urban forestry matters, provides this Community Impact Statement in response to motions CF25-0962, CF25-0974, and CF25-1141.

All three of these council motions are well-intended efforts to promote shade canopy in our city. Increasing shade canopy in Los Angeles is the most cost effective and important mitigation for climate change and supports making Los Angeles a more livable city. However, we are also in a climate-driven biodiversity crisis of emergency proportions. None of these motions make mention of this or the essential role of planting native tree species to support biodiversity.

This statement seeks to align these two priorities — shade and biodiversity — so that they advance together rather than in parallel.

CF25-0962 and CF25-0974 establish and advance the ShadeLA initiative. The goals of the ShadeLA program are admirable and justified. ShadeLA has deferred species decisions to LA City departments that have not consistently prioritized native species. These motions also reference the forthcoming Urban Forest Management Plan (UFMP), and from what has been reported to us so far by the City Forest Officer, the draft to our knowledge has not created a clear strategy for increasing native species representation despite strong public and stakeholder feedback urging this inclusion.

CF25-1141 recognizes the decline of unsustainable tree species and calls for a citywide replacement strategy. Yet its emphasis on “climate-adapted” exotics risks repeating past mistakes. Species that evolved elsewhere, even in similar climates, cannot replicate the ecological functions of native trees that co-evolved with California’s flora and fauna.

Only native trees can meet Los Angeles’ canopy, shade, and climate goals while simultaneously restoring the biodiversity that sustains our ecosystems. The City’s often stated “right tree for the right place” approach, generally defaults to a narrow palette of non-native trees used globally. There is no peer-reviewed scientific evidence to support the assumption that California natives are less suitable for urban use; when properly selected and maintained, they offer greater ecosystem value and often show higher survival rates.

This is a moment of opportunity to integrate the City's shade goals with its ecological responsibilities — to address two crises with one coordinated solution.

Without explicit native-species standards, any large-scale planting program risks worsening biodiversity loss. Currently, only about 3% of Los Angeles' street trees and fewer than 25% of park trees are native, even though ecological studies indicate that a minimum 70% regional native plant composition is needed to sustain biodiversity. CFAC and partner experts have identified over 90 native tree species well suited to urban conditions, demonstrating that native selection is not only feasible but abundant.

CFAC therefore urges the City to amend these motions to require ShadeLA and the Bureau of Street Services Urban Forestry Division to prioritize California native tree species as the default selection in all new plantings and replacement efforts. Report-backs and implementation plans should include clear language regarding the requirement of native species as the default choice along with biomass targets and metrics.

By integrating native biodiversity into ShadeLA and related initiatives, Los Angeles can expand its canopy, strengthen its ecosystems, and create a model for climate adaptation that is both resilient and regenerative.

CFAC appreciates the Council's leadership on these critical issues and welcomes the opportunity to collaborate on policy language, technical guidance, and implementation partnerships to ensure success.

Submitted by Joanne D'Antonio, Chair, for the Community Forest Advisory Committee