

MOTION

Los Angeles continues to experience the growing impacts of climate change, with increasingly frequent and prolonged extreme heat events threatening public health, straining energy infrastructure, and disproportionately affecting neighborhoods with limited shade and tree canopy. Urban trees are among the City's most effective natural assets for mitigating the urban heat island effect, improving air quality, reducing stormwater runoff, lowering energy consumption, enhancing pedestrian comfort, and creating healthier, more resilient communities.

Recognizing these benefits, the City has adopted ambitious climate action, sustainability, and urban forestry goals that seek to expand tree canopy throughout Los Angeles. However, despite significant investment in tree planting programs, opportunities to plant new street trees remain constrained by internal administrative tree-spacing guidelines that were developed decades ago and may no longer reflect current engineering practices, transportation design standards, or advances in urban forestry.

Recent research conducted by USC Dornsife's Spatial Sciences Institute and Public Exchange found that Los Angeles maintains some of the nation's most restrictive internal street tree spacing standards. The study concluded that modernizing these administrative guidelines could significantly increase the number of viable tree planting locations, particularly within neighborhoods that experience the greatest urban heat burdens, while continuing to maintain public safety, protect infrastructure, and preserve operational functionality.

Importantly, many of these spacing requirements exist as internal departmental policies rather than requirements established by ordinance, providing the City with an opportunity to review and update existing practices through coordinated administrative action. Revisiting these guidelines would allow the City to align its urban forestry policies with current best practices while advancing its climate resilience, environmental justice, and sustainability objectives.

Accordingly, it is appropriate for the City to evaluate whether existing tree-spacing standards unnecessarily limit opportunities to expand the urban forest and to identify policy and infrastructure improvements that will maximize future tree planting efforts.

I THEREFORE MOVE that the Council instruct the Bureau of Street Services - Urban Forestry Division, Los Angeles Department of Transportation, Bureau of Street Lighting, Bureau of Engineering, Department of Water and Power, Department of City Planning, and any other relevant departments, with assistance from the City Administrative Officer, to report within 90 days with recommendations to modernize the City's internal Tree Spacing Guidelines.

PRESENTED BY

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SECONDED BY

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