

Project name & location: **Culver City Urban Forest Master Plan, Culver City, CA**

Category II: Planning and Analysis

2016 Quality of Life Design Awards, ASLA, Southern California chapter

Introduction

The Culver City Urban Forest Master Plan provides the City with comprehensive recommendations and tools for preserving, managing, and enhancing its urban forest. In an innovative approach, the Plan considers the urban forest through the lens of landscape architecture, looking beyond “just” trees to view the urban forest as the ecosystem of plants and people in the city. Applying a design perspective, the Plan addresses the urban forest at the large, medium, and small scales; it incorporates urban-scale issues such as wayfinding and placemaking as well as addressing species selection and maintenance. With an elegant layout, compelling diagrams, and clear, concise text, the Plan is a valuable tool for City residents as well as staff.

The Plan includes extensive analysis of Culver City’s historic and existing urban forest, a well-researched Tree Palette for Culver City, Tree Designations for each street segment in the City, a Recommendations Framework, and comprehensive Tree Management Guidelines based on current best practices for tree planting, preservation, and maintenance.

Quality of Life

Recognizing the multiple and diverse ways the urban forest improves quality of life, the Plan addresses the role of trees in urban heat island reduction, habitat creation, water quality and conservation, as well as in shaping neighborhoods and strengthening communities. The Recommendations propose ways to augment these benefits through species selection, the overall species composition, planting and maintenance standards, and prioritizing areas with the greatest needs.

Water and the Urban Forest: Managing a Precious Resource

A section dedicated to water in the urban forest synthesizes current research about water use and conservation strategies, including ways to mitigate the effects of the current drought in California, and describes landscape-based stormwater management strategies in the City. In developing the Tree Palette for the City, high priority was given to species with low water needs and a tolerance for drought. The Tree Management Guidelines also includes detailed information about water use during planting and maintenance.

Community Education and Engagement

The planning process included a strong community engagement component including a survey and five community meetings. By presenting urban forest concepts in clear, accessible language and graphics, the consultant team fostered a robust community dialogue and an increased appreciation for the multiple benefits of the urban forest.

Summary

Comprehensive, compelling, and accessible, the Urban Forest Master Plan is an important tool that will assist the City and community in shaping a vibrant, healthy and sustainable urban environment for its residents, workers, and visitors.

Why is it significant? Urban forest in broad terms – not just trees, but urban ecology/natural systems-plants, water, energy, climate, humans, animals. What is particularly strong about it? – What does it include?

addresses the urban forest at several scales: large (the urban environment), medium (urban places), and small (urban plants). At the large scale, the plan analyzes LANDSCAPE HISTORY, ECOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK, WAYFINDING, the environmental benefits of trees related to air and water quality, energy + water conservation, reduction of urban heat island effect. At the medium scale, the Plan addresses place-making, city and neighborhood identity, and places of priority for future initiatives. At the small scale, the Plan addresses species selection (Tree Palette), Tree Management Guidelines

The Plan reflects current best practices, technologies, and city policies while allowing for future revision to maintain its relevance for the next 50 years. The Plan will be evaluated and revised periodically to reflect evolving conditions, new information, and updated best management practices.

Culver City is known for its history, culture and beauty; increasingly it is also known as a forward-thinking community with a vibrant, healthy urban environment. This Master Plan will offer important tools to aid the City in attaining its overall environmental and urban design goals.

Ecosystem of plants and people in the city. Small, medium and large scales This master Plan was also developed by the City in collaboration with consultants, including landscape architects, arborists, and consulting arborists. The Plan will be an important tool for managing the urban forest both in terms of long-range goals as well as day to day management practices.

Ecological framework, looked at pre-development habitat types, and reimagined ways that would provide more habitat and a stronger ecosystem in the City. Listed species palettes that are local natives, particularly adapted to the soil type and moisture levels of their respective ecological zones.

Proposals for Strengthening the urban forest: lengthen tree wells, interplant shade trees with palms, add tree wells and/or medians

Palette of selected species for C.

The Master Plan promotes a robust and resilient urban forest both today and in the future, so that the community will continue to enjoy its important environmental and social benefits.