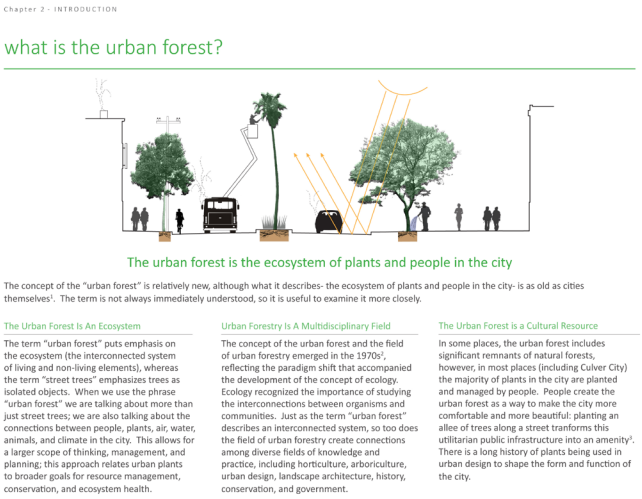
IMAGE SUMMARY
Project name & location: **Culver City Urban Forest Master Plan, Culver City, CA**
Category II: Planning and Analysis
ASLA, Southern California Chapter, 2016 Quality of Life Design Awards



Chapter 2 - INTRODUCTION

what is the urban forest?

The urban forest is the ecosystem of plants and people in the city

The concept of the "urban forest" is relatively new, although what it describes- the ecosystem of plants and people in the city- is as old as cities themselves[1]. The term is not always immediately understood, so it is useful to examine it more closely.

The Urban Forest Is An Ecosystem

The term "urban forest" puts emphasis on the ecosystem (the interconnected system of living and non-living elements), whereas the term "street trees" emphasizes trees as isolated objects. When we use the phrase "urban forest" we are talking about more than just street trees; we are also talking about the connections between people, plants, air, water, animals, and climate in the city. This allows for a larger scope of thinking, management, and planning; this approach relates urban plants to broader goals for resource management, conservation, and ecosystem health.

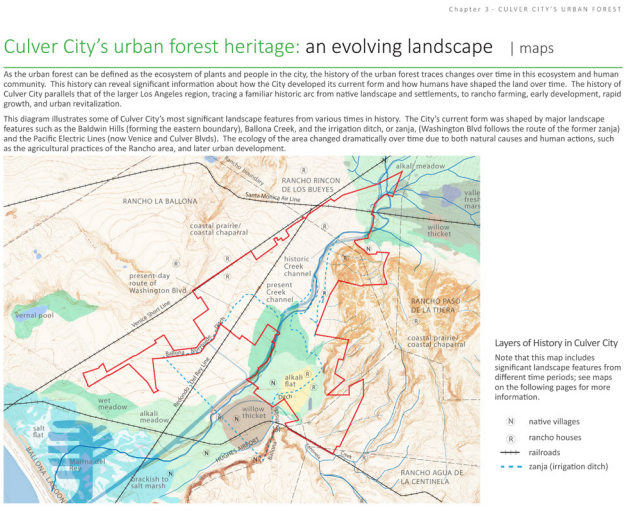
Urban Forestry Is A Multidisciplinary Field

The concept of the urban forest and the field of urban forestry emerged in the 1970s[2], reflecting the paradigm shift that accompanied the development of the concept of ecology. Ecology recognized the importance of studying the interconnections between organisms and communities. Just as the term "urban forest" describes an interconnected system, so too does the field of urban forestry create connections among diverse fields of knowledge and practice, including horticulture, arboriculture, urban design, landscape architecture, history, conservation, and government.

The Urban Forest is a Cultural Resource

In some places, the urban forest includes significant remnants of natural forests, however, in most places (including Culver City) the majority of plants in the city are planted and managed by people. People create the urban forest as a way to make the city more comfortable and more beautiful: planting an allee of trees along a street tranforms this utilitarian public infrastructure into an amenity[3]. There is a long history of plants being used in urban design to shape the form and function of the city.

1. In an innovative approach, the The Culver City Urban Forest Master 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.



Chapter 3 - CULVER CITY'S URBAN FOREST

Culver City's urban forest heritage: an evolving landscape | maps

As the urban forest can be defined as the ecosystem of plants and people in the city, the history of the urban forest traces changes over time in this ecosystem and human community. This history can reveal significant information about how the City developed its current form and how humans have shaped the land over time. The history of Culver City parallels that of the larger Los Angeles region, tracing a familiar historic arc from native landscape and settlements, to rancho farming, early development, rapid growth, and urban revitalization.

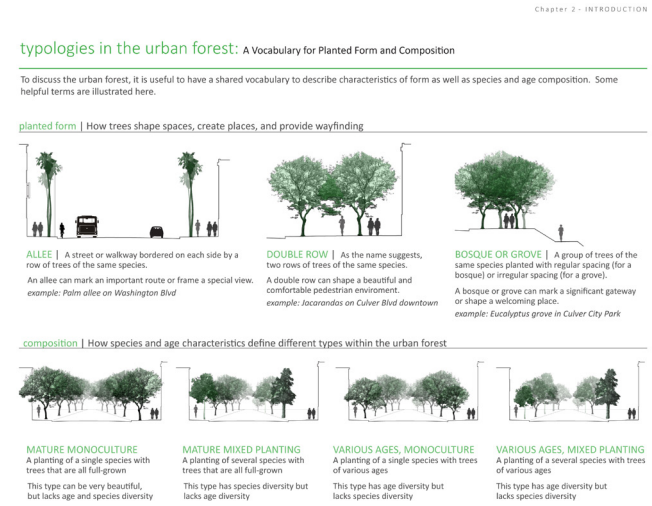
This diagram illustrates some of Culver City's most significant landscape features from various times in history. The City's current form was shaped by major landscape features such as the Baldwin Hills (forming the eastern boundary), Ballona Creek, and the irrigation ditch, or zanja, (Washington Blvd follows the route of the former zanja) and the Pacific Electric Lines (now Venice and Culver Blvds). The ecology of the area changed dramatically over time due to both natural causes and human actions, such as the agricultural practices of the Rancho area, and later urban development.

Layers of History in Culver City

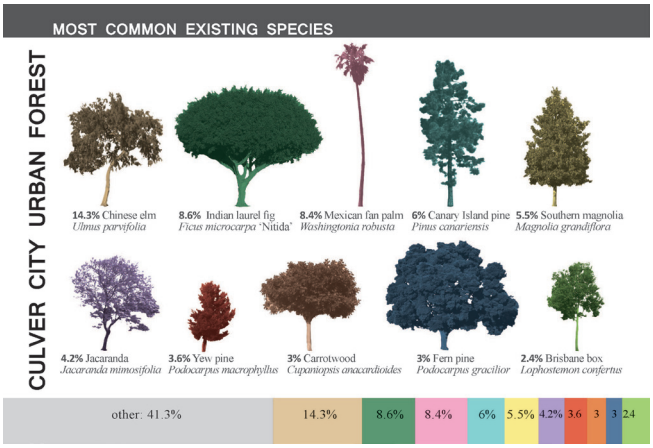
Note that this map includes significant landscape features from different time periods; see maps on the following pages for more information.

- native villages
- rancho houses
- railroads
- zanja (irrigation ditch)

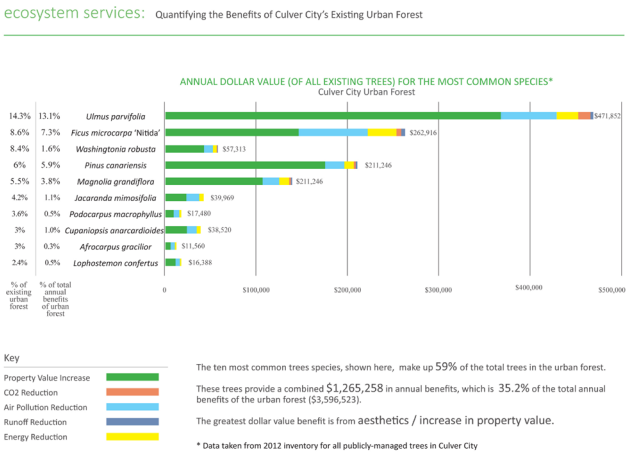
2. The Plan is based on a thorough analysis of the City's historical and existing urban forest. It includes a series of mappings, such as the one pictured here, that trace the evolution of the City's landscape over time. This analysis serves as a foundation for proposals and recommendations.



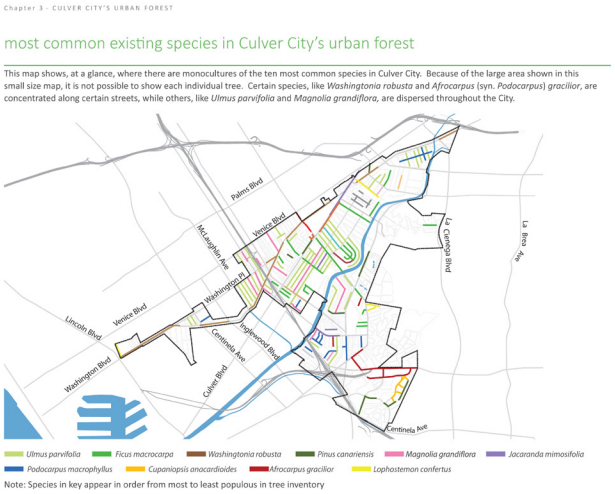
3. Designed to be useful for City residents as well as City staff, the Plan employs an elegant layout and compelling graphics to explain the foundational concepts of urban forestry. These diagrams illustrate useful urban forestry terms, such as grove and monoculture, in order to facilitate clear dialogue and planning.



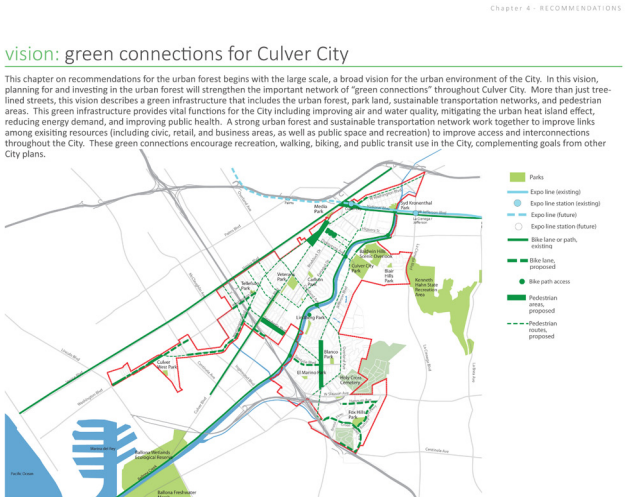
4. The planning process included a strong community engagement component. This postcard was sent out to residents to invite them to the five community meetings. By presenting urban forest concepts in clear, accessible language with compelling graphics, the consultant team fostered a robust community dialogue.



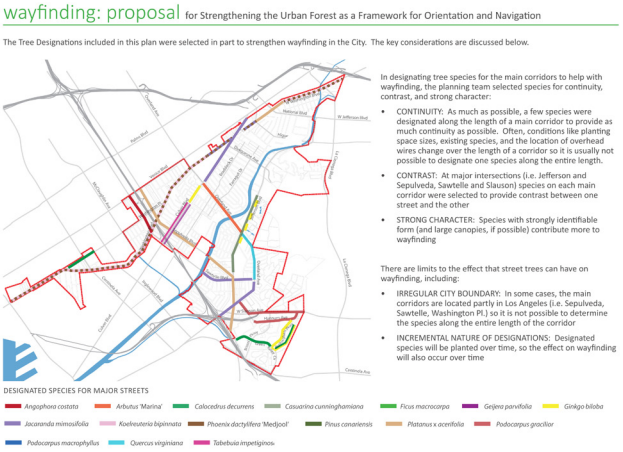
5. The Plan includes extensive analysis of Culver City's existing urban forest, including the most common species and genera, age composition, and the size of existing trees. This diagram shows the benefits of the most common species in the existing urban forest; these ecosystem services were quantified using iTree software.



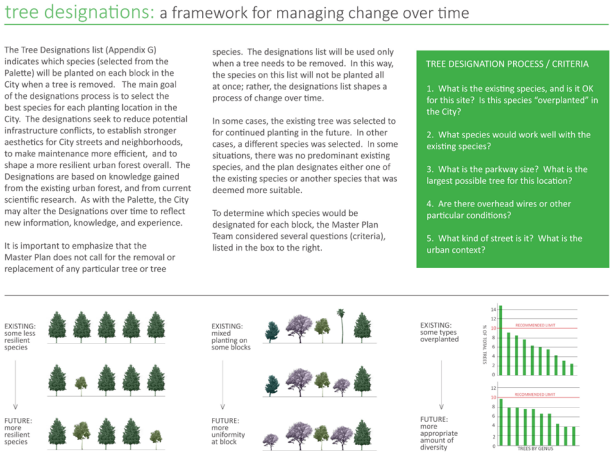
6. Maps and diagrams were designed to be compelling and accessible. This map shows the location of monocultures within the City, offering a quick look at large patterns of species composition and how they shape certain streetscapes and neighborhooods.



7. The Plan provides the City with comprehensive recommendations and tools for enhancing its urban forest. This diagram illustrates the overall vision for strengthening "green connections" in the City, a robust green infrastructure that includes the urban forest, park land and sustainable transportation networks.



8. Applying a design perspective to the urban forest, the Plan addresses large, urban-scale issues such as wayfinding and placemaking as well as addressing small scale questions of species selection and maintenance. This map illustrates a proposal for enhancing wayfinding through species selection for major corridors.



9. The Tree Designations list indicates the tree species to be planted on each block when an existing tree is removed. The text and diagrams here describe the criteria and thought process behind the designations and illustrate how they will create change in the urban forest over time.

10. The recommendations section indicates the places of highest priority for strengthening the urban forest. These recommendations, combined with comprehensive management guidelines and community resources, offer a powerful tool to assist the City and community in shaping a vibrant, healthy and sustainable urban environment.