

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.