

## Healthy Trees, Healthy Los Banos

*Our City's trees, forests, and other natural resources are recognized as integral to sustaining life and health for all City residents. A healthy, thriving, and sustainable urban forest is a community priority, to be thoughtfully managed and cared for by partnerships between the City and its residents to maximize public safety and benefits that include a thriving ecosystem, vibrant economy, and livable communities shared by all who live, work, and play in Los Banos.*

# DRAFT URBAN FOREST GOALS

AUDIT CATEGORY/GOAL THEME	GOAL DESCRIPTION
<b>Tree Management Policy (MP)</b>	The City's urban forest policies are the foundation for preserving the environmental benefits, management, and character of Los Banos' urban forest.
<b>Capacity and Training (CT)</b>	Los Banos has the capacity and expertise to provide optimal levels of service for sound urban forest management.
<b>Budget and Funding (BF)</b>	City resources enable comprehensive urban forest management for the preservation and enhancement of tree benefits.
<b>Assessments and Plans (AP)</b>	A thorough understanding of the urban forest ensures data-driven decisions, sustainable and comprehensive planning, and amplified tree benefits.
<b>Community Engagement (CE)</b>	Sustainable urban forest management and equity is achieved through a partnership with the City and its residents resulting in improved well-being, human health, and local economies.
<b>Green Asset Management (GA)</b>	Los Banos proactively manages the public trees, continues to grow and expand a healthy canopy, effectively mitigates storm damage, maintains public safety, and optimizes urban forest benefits.

# DRAFT URBAN FOREST ACTIONS

## GOAL

## ACTION

### Tree Management Policy (MP)

Refine and finalize the **recommended tree list** and update the Landscape Standards to detail the appropriate trees for public tree plantings.

**Align** resources and planning **efforts across** City **departments** and partners to meet common goals and improve efficiencies. Tree managing staff should engage in City department planning such as updates to the City's General Plan, Parks Master Plan, and plans for climate change, greenhouse gas reductions, sustainability, and human health.

**Prepare** a formal **document** to **recommend changes to tree-related code**, ordinances, standards (i.e., Landscape Standards), Standard Operating Procedures, and best practices based on recommendations and priorities described in Appendix ##.

Establish tiers of **achievable tree canopy goals** and tree **planting targets** Citywide, by zoning or land use type, neighborhood, and/or district. Use Appendix ## as guidance. At minimum, adopt a **no-net-loss policy** for public trees.

**Consolidate** tree-related **policies**, guidelines, best practices, standards, and **information** into a **tree manual** for planners, developers, homeowners, HOAs, and tree care companies.

# DRAFT URBAN FOREST ACTIONS

## GOAL

## ACTION

### Capacity and Training (CT)

Establish an **urban forestry working group** with regular meetings to monitor progress of implementing actions. Finalize lead implementers.

Evaluate the **roles and responsibilities** of the **Tree Commission** to align with goals and actions in the UFMP.

Ensure **tree-related operations** are represented or conducted by staff with industry credentials such as **International Society of Arboriculture** (ISA) Certified Arborist and Tree Risk Assessment Qualification (TRAQ) either directly through the department or supporting department.

Stay **current** with industry **research, science, and technology** through various platforms. An example includes management of current and potential exotic tree pest and disease threats.

Determine the necessary **staff required to** adequately **manage tree hazards and debris** within the public rights-of-way, effectively plant trees aligned with **canopy goals**, provide **post-planting care**, and **enforce tree ordinances**.

# DRAFT URBAN FOREST ACTIONS

## GOAL

## ACTION

### Budget and Funding (BF)

Continue to seek and acquire **funding** and technical **assistance** from agencies and organizations such as the CAL FIRE, U.S. Forest Service, University Extension Services, and others.

Use the data from the Assessments and Plans actions (i.e., tree maintenance needs, tree planting needs, ecosystem services) to support **budget** and **funding increases** aligned with resource needs and actions in the UFMP.

Develop an **annual education and training budget** for tree management staff that supports attending CEU accrediting seminars, workshops, and conferences each year. Consider the Tree Care Industry Association's Certified Treecare Safety Professional accreditation.

Based on the exploration of funding opportunities provided in the UFMP, develop a **sustained funding report** that details the opportunities and approaches for sustained, dedicated, and diversified funding. An example includes a pest control fee or alternative uses of the Gas Tax. Use Appendix ## as guidance.

Establish a **dedicated, sustained funding** source beyond the current departmental budget for urban forestry operations to increase the level of service to meet the community's high standards. Use Appendix ## as guidance.

# DRAFT URBAN FOREST ACTIONS

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### Assessments and Plans (AP)

**Maintain** an **inventory** of **public** street **trees** and update as maintenance, removals, and new plantings occur. Encourage partners to manage a current inventory of utility trees.

**Quantify** the ecosystem **benefits** and appropriate appraisal values of public trees to conduct a cost-benefit analyses of public trees. This informs management priorities, program structure, and raises public awareness of the urban forest benefits.

Complete an **urban forest audit** using similar criteria as the 2021 audit completed for the UFMP to evaluate improvements in urban forest management and adapt strategies.

**Strengthen storm and disaster** preparations, mitigations, and recovery strategies, protocols, and mechanisms.

**Complete** a comprehensive high-resolution **Urban Tree Canopy (UTC) Assessment** using industry recommended protocols to establish a baseline metric from which urban forest improvements can be measured.

# DRAFT URBAN FOREST ACTIONS

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## ACTION

### Community Engagement (CE)

Develop a **community outreach strategy** with clear and consistent language using information from the UFMP. Coordinate the strategy as a **Citywide initiative** rather than a departmental effort.

Continue to receive **Arbor Day Tree City USA** designation. Strive to achieve Arbor Day Growth Awards and Sterling status after 10 Growth Awards.

Conduct **biannual community surveys** to gauge public viewpoints and receive feedback on implementation of the UFMP and program success. Prioritize citizen feedback/requests and update the City website with frequently asked questions and additional resources.

Continue to **strengthen partnerships** with civic groups, non-profit organizations, Homeowners' Associations, volunteers, institutions, internal, City Council, neighborhoods, improvement districts, and non-conventional organizations aligned with goals of the UFMP. Support **volunteer events** and develop strategies to remove barriers to participation for **all community members**.

Provide **education and workshops** to the public about tree maintenance responsibilities, permitting, species selection, and proper young tree care as funding allows. Also provide information regarding unauthorized tree plantings, invasives, and management of volunteer trees. Align these efforts with [Action CE.01](#) for a community outreach strategy to **share** information **quarterly**.

# DRAFT URBAN FOREST ACTIONS

## GOAL

## ACTION

### Green Asset Management (GA)

**Prioritize** young and large tree **maintenance, removals,** and **risk** tree assessments based on updated inventory data and resources. Update the maintenance regimen (number of public trees pruned annually) by evaluating inventory data, program structure, available resources, and demands.

Coordinate with other City departments to **maximize** the number of **trees planted** through Capital Improvement Programs and stormwater management projects. Establish procedures for replacing damaged trees during infrastructure replacement projects.

Develop a more strategic approach to **tree species** and **site selection** using the **Recommended Tree List** (2022 UFMP) to ensure the resilience and optimize ecosystem service provision of Los Banos' urban forest.

Use Citywide tree inventory data and best available science for **long-term planning** and **management** of existing and future tree **pests** and **diseases** impacting the City's urban forest. Consider new research and guidance such as the 5% tree genera diversity rule (Ball, 2015).

Use the results of an updated high-resolution **Urban Tree Canopy (UTC) Assessment** to **prioritize tree plantings** based on low existing tree cover and enhancing benefits provided by trees.