

2014 Council Study Issue

DPW 14-07 Preservation of the Urban Canopy

Lead Department Department of Public Works

Sponsor(s) Sustainability Commission

History 1 year ago: 2 years ago:

1. **Scope of the Study**

- a. What are the key elements of the study?

Existing parcels of land within the city have a certain amount of tree cover which:

- a. Captures CO₂
- b. Provides shade for streets and parking lots thus lowering the heat island effect of this infrastructure
- c. Provides shade to buildings which reduces their cooling needs thus lowering their GHG production
- d. Provides air cleaning value to the immediate property and the city and citizens as a whole by filtering and absorbing air pollutants
- e. Absorb and retain storm water
- f. Provide habitat
- g. Adds financial value to the property
- h. Adds aesthetic value to the property and the city as a whole;

When new or redevelopment occurs, trees are often removed and cannot be replaced on the same parcel or in the same quantity or quality (as measured by canopy size, CO₂ capture potential, financial value, etc.) as those that were removed. Sometimes the trees that are removed are City trees and not trees on private property.

There are other places in the City where trees could be planted that offer the same net quality and quantity as those removed. However, some of the locations may not have been thought of as a resource. Such places include: the area of residential property that is used by the homeowner but actually in the City's right of way (sidewalk landscape strip); the areas of existing parks that are not covered with trees but are also not used as ball fields of any type and are already watered and maintained; and portions of the City's right of way that are currently residential streets approved for a reconfiguration.

This study issue would look at how the City can get more trees planted, including entering into a partnership with Our City Forest. This study would examine options for preserving and expanding Sunnyvale's urban canopy as properties are developed or re-developed. The study would identify how a partnership with Our City Forest can help the City identify specific areas of the City available for replacement trees of various sizes and characters, recommend incentives/subsidies for tree planting that could be funded with the proceeds from an in lieu fee, set goals for the net increase of tree cover, propose metrics to monitor progress toward the goals, and provide outreach and education to residents.

- b. What precipitated this study?

This study was proposed by the Sustainability Commission. The Commission received public comment on multiple occasions regarding preserving and expanding the City's urban canopy.

- c. Is this a multiple year project? No Planned Completion Year 2014

2. **Fiscal Impact**

a. Cost to Conduct Study

i. Level of staff effort required (opportunity cost)

Major Moderate Minor

ii. Amount of funding above current budget required \$

Will seek budget supplement Will seek grant funding

iii. Explanation of Cost: The cost associated with this study would be minor because the City currently has an Urban Forestry Management Plan that identifies many of the factors of the study.

b. Costs to Implement Study Results

No cost to implement.

Unknown. Study would include assessment of potential costs.

Some cost to implement. Explanation: City staff has engaged Our City Forest in the past. If the City were to partner with Our City Forest there would be a cost associated with the partnership which would be dependent on the level of engagement in Sunnyvale.

3. **Expected participation in the process**

Council-approved work plan

Council Study Session

Board/Commission Review by Sustainability Commission

4. **Staff Recommendation**

a. Position: Drop

b. Explanation: Staff recommends dropping this study issue. Chapter 19.46.120 of the Municipal Code already includes a requirement that new parking lots be designed to provide at least 50% shading from trees after a 15-year establishment period. Sunnyvale has also developed an urban forestry management plan (UFMP) that has addressed many of the issues that the proposed study issue examines. Currently Sunnyvale's tree canopy cover is estimated at 18.4% of the land area of Sunnyvale. In an analysis of the tree canopy cover of 21 California cities only five had canopy cover greater than 18%. The UFMP addresses increasing canopy cover and recommendations on implementation. Also the UFMP recommends exploring the use of a non-profit urban forestry group e.g. 'Our City Forest' to plant and establish new trees in Sunnyvale.

Implementation of any recommendations either from the UFMP or this study issue will require funding and subsequent City Council approval. The UFMP is in final review and is anticipated to be presented to Council early in 2014. This study proposal is redundant to the research and recommendations of the UFMP.

Reviewed By:	Approved By:
 11-1-13	 11-4-13
Department Director	Date
	 City Manager
	Date