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**REVISED READ-IN MOTION BY SUPERVISORS HOLLY J. MITCHELL
LINDSEY P. HORVATH**

**Adoption and Equitable Implementation of the Los Angeles County Community
Forest Management Plan**

Trees are an important part of our community infrastructure. Like our drinking water system or sidewalks, trees provide valuable benefits that support community health and improve quality of life. Trees are also essential to our climate resilience and environmental efforts—they support our stormwater management, provide shade and cooling, improve air quality, and support our region’s biodiversity. As trees mature, they offer greater benefits than the resources required to maintain them. Every neighborhood, every community, every individual, deserves to enjoy the benefits that an environment rich in trees provides.

However, canopy cover in Los Angeles County (County) is not equally distributed. In the unincorporated areas, canopy cover varies significantly, with communities ranging from as little as 1% to 58% tree canopy coverage. Much of this variation is due to the diverse ecological conditions of the County, which spans mountains, beaches, and deserts. Some of the variation is also due to development patterns, with communities ranging from densely urbanized to suburban to rural areas. However, disparities in tree

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canopy cover also result from discriminatory policies and practices, including redlining, racially restrictive covenants, and the siting of polluting industries and freeways, all of which contributed to disinvestment in critical infrastructure in communities of color, including trees. Today, these same communities are on the frontlines of climate change, facing extreme heat exacerbated by the urban heat island effect. These impacts are felt acutely in communities from West Athens-Westmont to West Carson to the Northeast San Fernando Valley, all of which have tree canopy cover well below the Countywide average of 15.9%. To make progress towards closing the shade equity gap in the County, we must prioritize communities with the highest need using proven strategies to preserve, expand, and maintain our tree canopy.

To this end, the County's Community Forest Management Plan (CFMP) lays out an equity-focused, actionable, long-term strategy to manage trees in the unincorporated communities of the County using valuable data, analyses, and guidance relevant to the entire Los Angeles region so that everyone can share the benefits of trees today and for generations to come. CFMPs are sometimes referred to as Urban Forest Management Plans (UFMP). The County is using the term "community" rather than "urban" to reflect the diverse array of community types across the County, including urban, suburban, and rural. In this CFMP, "community forest" is defined as the collection of all trees in our communities, including along streets, between buildings, in parks, and around all of the places we live, work, and play. The CFMP covers all parts of managing our community forest, including tree planting and establishment, tree maintenance, tree protection and preservation, and community engagement and education.

Identified as a priority in both the Board adopted OurCounty Sustainability Plan (Action 43)¹ and the Climate Action Plan (Action A3.1)², the CFMP will enhance the County's ability to effectively manage its community forest and increase its tree canopy, especially in the communities most lacking in parks and tree canopy coverage as identified in the Countywide Parks Needs Assessments³ and the CFMP, respectively. The

¹<https://ourcountyla.lacounty.gov/plan>

² [gp 2045 Climate Action Plan June-2024.pdf \(lacounty.gov\)](#)

³<https://lacountyparkneeds.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/FinalReport.pdf>

CFMP will also facilitate the County's ability to respond to emerging threats to the community forest, such as climate change impacts and invasive pests, by setting forth consistent management approaches based on current science and identifying policy and program needs to support these approaches. For example, guided by recommendations in the CFMP, the County is mounting a collaborative regional response to the gold spotted oak borer, which threatens oak trees in communities such as unincorporated Chatsworth and the Santa Monica Mountains.

Led by the Chief Sustainability Office, the CFMP was created in partnership with County departments, community leaders, technical experts, and County residents. Specifically, the CSO coordinated and collaborated with various departments that play active roles in community forest management, including Agricultural Commissioner/Weights and Measures, Beaches and Harbors, Economic Opportunity, Fire, Internal Services, Parks and Recreation, Public Health, Public Works, and Regional Planning. This effort also involved consultation with various subject matter experts and extensive community engagement and outreach conducted Countywide with the support of more than twenty community-based organizations.

The CFMP is also aligned with important County efforts to advance equity in the built environment, including the Climate Ready Communities initiative, which seeks to increase resiliency for people, communities, and infrastructure vulnerable to climate risk, while advancing equity and environmental justice. Additionally, the InfrastructureLA Initiative has supported early implementation of the CFMP through the identification of funding strategies and grant opportunities such as the \$8 million grant that was recently awarded to the County by the Urban and Community Forestry Program for the establishment of plants.

The CFMP identifies the following five crosscutting goals that intersect with the interrelated challenges of equity, climate resilience, and regional coordination:

1. Equitable Tree Canopy: A community forest that ensures equitable access to the benefits of trees for all County residents.
2. Regional Community Forest: A community forest that is collaboratively managed across jurisdictions to support biodiversity and protect against

regional threats.

3. County Tree Management: A County managed community forest that is maintained with best practices and expanded for social, cultural, and ecological benefits.
4. Workforce and Economic Opportunities: A community forest that provides economic opportunities and is supported by a skilled local workforce.
5. Commitment to Funding and Partnerships: A community forest that is supported by creative, long-term funding and collaborative partnerships.

To achieve these important goals, the County must take both the short- and long-term actions detailed in the CFMP. This includes exploring ways for the County to extend the establishment watering period for street trees, meaning the period of time that newly planted trees receive regular watering from the County. This is the best practice to increase the likelihood of survival of our valuable street trees as well as an important equity consideration, as the cost and labor of watering new trees may otherwise fall on residents. The CFMP also highlights the impact of depaving—removing pavement such as asphalt and concrete and replacing it with soil and growing space for trees and other plants—which may be appropriate and necessary in some of the highest need areas due to the lack of existing opportunities to plant additional trees. Depaving can also provide multiple additional benefits to communities facing environmental burdens, including reduced heat retention and increased stormwater infiltration. Additionally, the CFMP lays out important steps to expand the impact of our County’s efforts through regional and community partnerships that can support long-term fundraising efforts, develop solutions to assist residents with the cost and maintenance of trees, and support the development of a skilled local workforce that can care for trees.

The County must continue to explore these and other innovative approaches to address the intersecting challenges of extreme heat and existing shade inequities. By prioritizing equitable tree canopy preservation and expansion, aligning community forestry efforts with current climate initiatives, and expanding community partnerships, the County can ensure that all residents benefit from a healthier, cooler, and more climate-resilient Los Angeles.

WE THEREFORE MOVE THAT THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS:

1. Adopt the Los Angeles County Community Forest Management Plan (CFMP);
2. Direct the Chief Sustainability Officer (CSO) and relevant departments to integrate the CFMP's targets and goals into their work plans;
3. Direct the Director of the Department of Public Works (DPW) to report back to the Board in writing in 60 days with an analysis of the cost, potential funding opportunities and options to implement the following:
 - a. Extended watering for the first three years after tree planting (referred to as "the establishment period");
 - b. Enhanced street tree planting policies in high canopy need unincorporated communities that include community feedback from the Climate Ready Communities initiative and accelerate tree canopy equity; and
 - c. Strategies to reduce maintenance costs, particularly for tree species that are expensive to maintain and that do not align with CFMP species list recommendations.
4. Direct the CSO, in collaboration with the Directors of DPW, Parks and Recreation (DPR), and other relevant Departments to seek funding for and implement pilot depaving projects on County property, including the right-of-way, in high canopy need communities, and consider opportunities to integrate trees into conceptual project designs associated with Vision Zero and other community improvement initiatives;
5. Direct the CSO to partner with relevant departments, utilities, and external community partners to seek funding for and implement an equity-based residential tree planting program for unincorporated communities using a community stewardship approach;
6. Direct the Director of DPR to identify opportunities to increase tree canopy in existing County Parks located in communities with high canopy need;
7. Direct the Director of the Department of Economic Opportunity (DEO) to work with regional partners such as cities, Metro, Caltrans, and Southern California

- Edison to inform their Inflation Reduction Act-funded work to develop workforce development opportunities for tree planting and maintenance projects Countywide, especially in communities most lacking in tree coverage;
8. Direct the Directors of the Internal Services Department and DEO, in collaboration with the CSO, the Directors of DPW, DPR, the Department of Beaches and Harbor, the County Librarian and other relevant department heads, to perform a baseline analysis of a) the number of active County contracts and purchase orders related to the procurement of trees and plants, including the total number of trees sourced locally within the County; and b) current tree and native plant nurseries within the County, including how many of those are County vendors and receiving contracts or purchase orders; and based on this analysis, work with departments to identify and evaluate potential changes in County procurement, contracting, and other policies, and procedures and strategies that may be necessary to better support tree and native plant nurseries within the County and increase the local supply of high quality, native, and climate resilient trees and plants;
 9. Direct the CSO to report annually regarding progress towards equitable implementation of the CFMP goals and actions; and
 10. Direct the Chief Executive Office, through the Legislative Affairs and Intergovernmental Relations Branch, to support local, State, and Federal legislation, funding measures, grant opportunities, and other initiatives that provide resources needed for the implementation of the CFMP.

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