

## TREES

### Trees Make San Diego Livable

Trees make an enormous contribution to our quality of life. They naturally cool our environment when it's hot, providing shade to buildings, sidewalks, parks, and outdoor cafes, and restoring moisture to the air. As a result, they make it pleasant to walk about, even downtown. Trees improve public health. In addition to lowering temperatures, they reduce illnesses related to heat, and they provide sheltered places to relax, socialize, or be physically active.

Trees make important contributions to meeting climate action goals. Their wood sequesters carbon. They reduce energy use for cooling and make neighborhoods more comfortable. Adding trees in disadvantaged communities also serves an environmental justice purpose.

Trees are environmentally useful in many other ways. They filter air pollutants, hold storm water, buffer noise, add beauty to streets and other public spaces, and serve as habitat for birds and other wildlife. As a result, they add important features to our city's resilience against future weather and climate changes.

For all these reasons, we need more trees in parks, street parkways, schoolyards, parking lots, home backyards, and businesses. San Diego has an Urban Forest Management Five-Year Plan, stating goals of increasing the city's overall tree canopy and improving its maintenance. But this plan is not being implemented properly, largely because it is underfunded and understaffed.

*I want to take a fresh look at the plan, further increase the size of our urban forest, and allocate the staff and budget to keep it healthy.*

## San Diego Needs More Trees

The City of San Diego contains about one million trees, including about 200,000 city-owned street trees, for a total tree canopy coverage of about 13%. This is far fewer trees per acre than other U.S. cities such as Boston, Miami, Seattle, and Sacramento. The Climate Action Plan sets a goal of having tree canopy coverage over 15% of the city by 2020, yet we are not planting nearly enough trees to reach even that modest target. We need to dramatically increase those numbers, beginning immediately, since it takes as long as twenty years for trees to reach their full potential.

The trees we plant must be the right tree in the right place. They must be of high-quality, properly planted, and given sufficient after-care and water. Otherwise, many will wither or die. Community plans can help advance these goals by encouraging not only accelerated tree planting but also encouraging, where appropriate, the use of native, water-efficient species.

The city offers property owners free street trees to be planted in the public right of way along their property frontage. But this program is not well publicized and therefore underutilized. We also should be providing incentives to owners to plant trees within their own property and educating owners as to the minimal cost of providing adequate water.

*I will lead a campaign to plant more trees throughout the city, and will personally join with community residents and businesses to plant trees in every district.*

## Trees Need Care, for Our Own Benefit

Urban forests require regular care and attention, including watering, pruning, and sometimes removal. Diseased trees, as well as trees that are inappropriate for their location or have excessive water requirements, should be replaced with suitable trees. All of that requires a

commitment of ongoing funding and staffing sufficient to ensure that our urban forest thrives. Providing those resources is a good investment, as urban trees provide three times the value in benefits to the community as the cost of maintaining them. In addition to the city, funding and volunteer efforts can come from homeowner associations, business improvement districts, local businesses, local non-profits, residents, and others interested in enhancing the quality of life and sustainability of our city.

A proverb declares that the best time to plant a tree was twenty years ago. The next best time is now.