



TreePeople's Comments on Proposed Sidewalk Repair Recommendations August, 2015

TreePeople welcomes the Willits settlement as an opportunity to think differently about the place trees occupy in our city--both literally and figuratively.

At a time when we need a healthy, ample tree canopy more than ever, this settlement is an opportunity to invest in infrastructure that will make our communities more livable, for those who need a safe way to navigate our sidewalks, and for all of us who need the protection from heat and sun that our urban tree canopy provides in our warming climate.

We are facing a crucial moment in history, when climate change is amplifying our city's needs -- not only for urban cooling, but to increase local water supply, improve water quality, and mitigate increased flooding predicted in our future. Simultaneously, the city is facing costly mandates to deal with these issues in addition to addressing aging infrastructure, including, but not limited to, sidewalks. **Now is the time for the City to step back and consider all of its interrelated goals and mandates, including urban heat protection, local water supply, stormwater quality, street repair, and flood prevention needs and how they may intersect with work done on sidewalk replacement.**

Given that projects in some of the City's infrastructure plans impact streets, parkways and sidewalks (including the City's Stormwater Capture Master Plan and Enhanced Watershed Management Plans) in addition to regular and emergency street repair and maintenance, it behooves the City to coordinate projects and leverage funding streams while still meeting the needs of the settlement.

TreePeople emphasizes that the right trees in the right places can help work toward meeting all of these needs. Many of the tree species currently causing sidewalk damage were not good choices for those spaces in the first place and different tree species should be replanted. TreePeople believes this is an opportunity for Angelenos to understand and promote the benefits of "the Right Tree for the Right Place" and show that trees can not only help protect Angelenos but are vital part of our City's infrastructure.

A properly planned and implemented urban tree canopy gives the city an opportunity to manage our water wisely, cost-effectively, and with multiple benefits. Trees provide necessary "green infrastructure" that contributes benefits to the City's residents including: urban cooling, mitigating air and stormwater pollution, capturing and storing carbon, slowing, storing and filtering stormwater, helping to reduce flooding, and



increasing our local water supply. In addition, trees are the only infrastructure that increase in value as they get older. If done properly, the money set aside for this settlement allows an opportunity to leverage other sources of funds and achieve multiple needs -- including those of the settlement -- with one set of actions.

Moving forward with this planning process, TreePeople urges the city to:

1. Create transparent criteria for which trees stay and which are removed;
2. Develop a comprehensive suite of solutions for improving the growing spaces of the trees that are selected to stay, including considerations for stormwater capture/management;
3. Provide a species list reflecting thoughtful choices for the trees replacing those being removed, including size and ratio considerations (i.e., the largest tree appropriate for the space; using the city's approved tree list and parkway size recommendations; species that are climate-appropriate and have a low water-use rating; and insect and disease resist species);
4. Whenever possible and appropriate, mature trees should be saved through the use of adaptations to the growing space and other best practices based on the needs of the location and species;
5. Develop the "fix and release" program such that the tree and infrastructure choices support the best management practices for maximum canopy (including tree maintenance) and stormwater management. This includes but is not limited to:
 1. Create a clear process to determine who is responsible for the establishment and long-term care of the trees;
 2. Ensure the preservation of viable trees is the highest priority;
 3. Create materials and strategies to communicate this with the public and homeowners;
 4. When replacing sidewalks, install curb cuts connected to treatment wetland swales for all newly planted parkways; plant LID approved parkways plants and remove or upgrade irrigation per LID requirements; allow for ease of design so that curb cuts can be installed without a permit (or for a no-fee permit) and maintained easily;
6. Include TreePeople and other key partners (such as those on the Community Forest Advisory Committee) as advisors in the creation of this plan. While we



have outlined principles in this letter, we also have specific recommendations we would like to share as the process moves forward.

Clearly there are trees across the city that are NOT the “right tree in the right place,” hence the damage to sidewalks. The Willits settlement is our opportunity to select more appropriate trees, considering drought, emerging climate change/increased heat and the needs of our communities, including safe passageways for all pedestrians.

Major cities around the world are seeking to rapidly increase urban tree canopy cover to protect their citizens from increasing temperatures, which are causing a sharp rise in death amongst vulnerable populations. The City of Los Angeles and its citizens have invested billions of dollars over the last 5 decades in creating an urban tree canopy, consisting in large part of street trees. These trees are doing the urgent work of saving human lives as peak temperatures in Los Angeles rise. It is therefore important to appreciate that it takes decades to establish tree canopy with sufficient density to provide needed health and life protection. Every effort should be made to work strategically to protect canopy cover while replacing sidewalks and those trees which must be sacrificed.

We can't start LA's urban forest over from scratch, but we can begin the process of creating the transition to a healthier, more beneficial urban forest that, in our changing climate, continues working for all of Los Angeles. TreePeople looks forward to being a part of the discussion and subsequent planning moving forward.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Andy Lipkis".

Andy Lipkis
President and Founder
TreePeople