

MOTION

Urban forests have long been proven to provide multiple and essential socio-ecological benefits. We know that trees use CO₂ and produce oxygen. Lesser known is that they also capture harmful diesel particulates and smog-producing gases like nitrogen oxides, sulfur and ozone. Trees capture rain and slowly release it, reducing soil erosion, slowing storm water and protecting us from floods. Shade trees reduce heat-island effect and protect our skin from harmful UV exposure. Properly placed, shade trees can cool our homes, allowing us to reduce our energy use by up to 50%.

Urban forests create mulch that allows rain to percolate into groundwater supplies, fostering living soils. Tree roots also uptake nutrients and other pollutants keeping them out of our storm drains, rivers and oceans and reducing MS4 compliance costs. Fruit and nut producing trees in our urban forest produce needed sustenance for the people and the native wildlife that call our diverse region home.

Research has shown that the more trees there are in a community the more reduced violence, improved civic engagement, increased property values, better overall resident health and general well-being. Additionally, trees increase the life span of city infrastructure. On streets that are shaded, the asphalt deteriorates less quickly, requiring them to be paved less often.

The City is entering its fourth year of a record-breaking drought – made worse by a decades-long warming trend associated with global climate warming – and is asking its residents to reduce outdoor water use. In some cases, tree health is being unintentionally impacted by these essential reductions.

Mature shade trees are being removed in an effort to fix sidewalks. Tree species that produce significant shade could take years to grow large enough to do so. Small tree species, mostly grown for spring floral displays, are replacing shade trees, providing significant benefit reductions. Trees are also being topped and damaged by unskilled or hurried contractors hired by homeowners and City Departments.

Drought-stressed trees are more susceptible to the spread of disease and invading pathogens like bacterial leaf scorch, *Xylella fastidiosa*, a widespread disease now common in Liquidambar and other common trees in Los Angeles. Another increasingly widespread pest is the polyphagous shot hole borer, which has defied all conventional and chemical methods of control. A fungus spread by the polyphagous shot hole borer is now killing thirty-five species of trees throughout the region.

Temperatures in the City have increased by 7°F, climate change-related heat waves will increase the stress on trees as well as increase the potential for major public health impacts.

Yet, cities can have a purposeful, positive impact on tree health. In 2009, the State of Victoria, Australia, suffered an extreme heatwave that contributed to the deaths of 374 people. The City of Melbourne has since implemented a plan to double tree canopy cover by 2040. A denser tree canopy can reportedly reduce heat in neighborhoods by up to 9 °F, which may be enough to save lives.



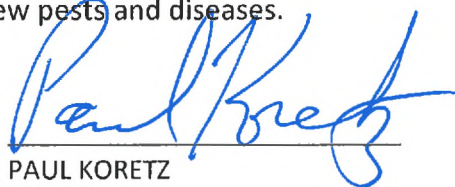
APR 17 2013

As the City moves to implement measures aimed at resiliency and sustainability, it must prioritize the tree health and maximize the beneficial impact of its urban forest. A robust, healthy and climate-resilient tree canopy must be at the heart of its plans.

I THEREFORE MOVE that the Bureau of Street Services' Urban Forestry Division, in consultation with plant pathologists and entomologists, and other local tree-focused organizations, be directed to report to the City Council regarding the health of the trees in Los Angeles. The report should include an assessment of the City's ability to enforce current regulations, the need for new regulations and guidelines, the benefits of trees to our local watersheds and to climate resilience, reducing heat-island effect by increasing tree canopy cover, strategies to support trees without over-taxing local water resources, plans to address existing and emerging health problems of the urban forest. Given the recent agreement to commit to an extensive sidewalk repair plan, the report should also include strategies that consider potential impacts on canopy, needed resources, and the overall future outlook of our urban forest.

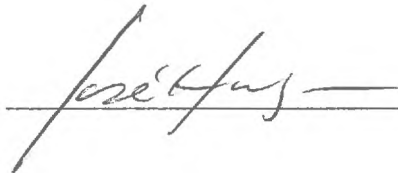
I FURTHER MOVE that the Urban Forestry Division be directed to collaborate to develop an urban forest management plan that will highlight new strategies to protect and enhance our urban forest without imported water supplies, provide tree health care during drought, reduce heat-island effect by increasing shade tree canopy, diversify street tree species by increasing native and low-water use trees and address new pests and diseases.

PRESENTED BY:



PAUL KORETZ
Councilmember, 5th District

SECONDED BY:



ORIGINAL