Davis, CA

Summary of Collaborator Feedback

Challenges & Opportunities 2022

Davis CALIFORNIA

Tree Davis

HELIX Environmental Planning

DAVEY Resource Group

Introduction

During the development of the Urban Forest Management Plan, collaborators identified challenges and opportunities which they felt should be considered in the plan. Most were considered and included in the Urban Forest Management Plan's "Collaborator Findings" subsections. Some of the suggestions from collaborators are out of the control of the Public Works Utilities & Operations Department; however, should be considered in larger conversations surrounding the urban forest and the environment.

1. Staffing and funding
    - Understaffed, moving toward previous staffing levels which supported a 3 person in-house crew
    - Defining the right balance between in-house versus contracted work
    - Funding levels do not support the level of tree care the community desires
    - Additional and alternative funding options
    - Equipment is successfully shared across departments (Parks and PW)
    - Equipment is not adequate to respond to work needs
    - Lack of arborist internship program
    - Desire for enhanced staff capacity to provide structure and collaboration with community non-profits
    - Cost of liabilities
2. Contract management
    - Figuring out the optimal amount of work conducted in-house versus via contractors
    - Reviewing and updating the current contract for tree work
    - Contractor oversight
    - Not all tree work is meeting community expectations
    - The City needs one point of contact with the contractor
3. Right tree, right place
    - Small statured trees are planted, which block signage and infrastructure AND do not provide much shading (e.g., business and road signage, park attributes)

- Planting park trees farther from the sidewalks so there is less need for root pruning
- Davis has diverse soil types that impact tree success
- There is a desire for increased shade in particular areas (specifically where people are: bus stops, streets, bike paths and pedestrian corridors, adjacent to buildings, and in parks)
- Appropriate snag retention
- Small trees are being planted adjacent to bike trails that will never overhang the street and shade the bike lane, which is not incentivizing people to use these areas, especially when it is hot
- Trees are not strategically planted to provide future benefits

4. Public tree care
    - Unattended work orders
        - Lack of communication, response, and follow through
    - Parks and Public Works use different asset inventory systems, which can make cross departmental communication difficult
    - Concerns about the accuracy of the existing tree inventory, including condition a ownership/responsibility
    - Coordination with park and tree maintenance to avoid conflicts
    - Inadequate pruning and inspection cycle (should be more frequent)
        - Public safety concerns
    - Inadequate clearance for double decker buses
    - Young trees do not have as high of clearance and buses and garbage trucks hit them
    - Stump removal does not always occur quickly
    - Stumps commonly sucker creating maintenance challenges
    - There is a desire for more street trees to enhance the aesthetics
    - Adjacent property owner responsibilities and follow through for maintenance of the rights-of-way, especially watering
        - Education on watering needs
        - Education on watering during drought
        - Education on the cost to water
    - There is a successful leaf litter program

- There has been successful habitat restoration in open space areas
- Maintenance impacts on wildlife
- Structural pruning of young trees to reduce costs for larger, higher priority pruning
- Privatization of street trees could result in variations in the level of care for street trees
- Keeping records of tree maintenance for each tree to maintain a history for each tree
  - Use records to identify appropriate maintenance cycles by species

5. Watering during establishment
   - Adjacent property owner responsibilities and follow through
   - Identifying collaborations to help expand the city's supplemental watering program
6. Climate change
   - Installing landscaping that does not compete with trees for water
   - Drought tolerant species
   - Species and genus diversity, even at the neighborhood level
   - Lack of wildfire fuel policies as they relate to trees and firebreak locations
   - Concern over future water security
   - Tree mortality reduces the reliability of trees serving as carbon sinks
7. Age/succession of the urban forest
   - Davis is losing tree canopy
   - The urban forest is aging
   - Some neighborhoods have a large amount of mature trees of the same species/monocultures
   - Tree Davis is working with some neighborhoods interested in long-term plan for the succession and replacement of the tree populations
   - Phased removals of aging/declining trees coupled with shadow planting
8. Tree planting
   - Adequate planting space/soil volume

        - The downtown has limited space for tree planting
        - Parking lots have limited space for tree planting
    - Tree plantings are not occurring in-house (contractors and Tree Davis)
    - Seedling quality and species availability
    - Moving toward greater species diversity at the neighborhood level
    - Desire for incentives for tree planting on private property
    - More AND better trees need to be planted
9. Parking lot shade goals
    - Canopy goals have been hard to implement
    - Parking lot planting locations are stressful and many of the trees struggle
    - Retrofit older parking lots with planters that could support tree plantings
    - Parking lots should not be a great priority for tree planting, rather greenspaces and other areas of town should be priorities (places people spend more time)
    - Soil volume requirements and tree standards of growth are not monitored/enforced
    - Update the shade ordinance to be more achievable
        - Standard designs for parking lots
    - Creating spaces in parking lots that are conducive to tree planting
    - Parking lot shade requirements are not enforced for apartment complexes, which creates canopy inequities for renters and people w/ lower incomes
    - There is a desire for more information on tree canopy in parking lots to help guide future policy
10. Integrating trees and solar
    - Trees have been removed in parking lots to accommodate solar installations and in these instances, there has been community discontent
    - There are several “camps” in Davis, one for trees and one for solar, and the situation is viewed as a conflict
    - Davis is experimenting with cool roadway materials for parking lots that do not absorb as much heat

11. Development
    - Tension when developing infill sites
    - There is a need to consider trees earlier in the development process
        - Ensure planter strips are large enough to accommodate trees
    - Projects to widen the sidewalk take space away from the planter strip/trees
    - Developers are willing to work with the city and follow requests
    - Designs that consider existing trees
    - Designs that allow for more soil volume/air and water infiltration (e.g., permeable pavements, chokers, stormwater catchment swales/planting areas, suspended pavements)
        - Standards for use of structural cells for sidewalks of a certain size
    - Root barriers have been used in the past to avoid infrastructure conflicts but other, more tree friendly options are available
    - Developers are legally required to plant and maintain trees on private property
12. Mitigation
    - Mitigation requirements could be stronger
        - Appropriately valuing trees that must be removed
        - Appropriate consequences for non-compliance
13. Tree protection (construction/development) - verification and enforcement
    - Currently, when Municipal Code is broken, the penalty is a misdemeanor which the city attorney does not typically pursue
    - Tree protection plan is not listed in the *Design Review Information Checklist*
    - Site visits do not include checking for tree protection
        - No documentation to indicate they have acknowledged the requirements for tree protection
    - Site plan/landscape plan reviews used to go to the city arborist
    - City arborist used to inspect after site plan implementation
    - Tree verification post installation does not occur to ensure mitigation plantings survive

- Educational materials on tree protection are not provided during the permitting process
- Ordinance loop hole for single family homes, where those that understand the ordinance get out of tree protection
- Indicate all trees on the site and adjacent to the site that may be affected by construction activities
- Complimentary arborists reports
- Tree protection plan is not listed in the design review information checklist
- Tree inspections do not occur during the construction/development process
- Landscape plans are not publicly available
- No arborist fees in land development agreement
- The Planning Commission reviews 90% of new landscape/tree planting plans
- Encouraging community advocacy for tree protection and not relying on Tree Davis to “blow whistles”

14. Private tree care
    - There are a lot of rental properties with absentee landlords, as a result the trees on the property are not getting taken care of or watered during drought
    - Communicating clear actions that will help grow/maintain canopy
    - Expanding sustainability and resiliency guidelines for UC Davis students to off-campus housing
    - Increased areas of impervious surfaces in residential areas to accommodate more space for parking
15. Equitable distribution of canopy and urban forest resources
    - Some areas don't have as much access to green space
    - Financing greenspace projects where opportunities exist
    - Some areas have a lot of hardscape
    - Newer neighborhoods have lower canopy cover when compared to established neighborhoods

- Some neighborhoods have the capability to be more influential/vocal and these may not be the areas with tree canopy/equity challenges
- There is not a lot of public understanding/recognition that Davis has equity problems
- Identifying and solving problems at the neighborhood level
- Non-profit involvement in creating a more equitable urban forest
- It can be hard to reach minority populations and communities where English is not the primary language
- Including indigenous and scientific ecological methods

16. Follow through on community vision (credibility)
    - Overcommitted, which has resulted in previous staff being unresponsive
    - Public expects a rapid response tree crew
    - City should be more able to interface with the public instead of responding to emergencies
    - 2002 Community Forest Management Plan (CFMP) has not been followed
    - The city successfully gets messaging out to the community around trees, there is room for improvement (i.e., city has a wide net across the geographic community but may be missing smaller enclaves)
17. Timeline for Urban Forest Management Plan (UFMP) development
    - Lost credibility with lack of implementation of the 2002 CFMP
    - Concern about the short timeline
    - Community engagement limitations
    - The online format will allow for continual updates
        - Communicating the vision for continual updates to the community
18. Private tree maintenance
    - Approved design
    - Maintaining trees after the construction phase and replacing them when they die
    - Trees at many rental properties do not get the care they need, there are many absentee landowners

- Watering during drought

19. Climate change
    - Adapting to hotter/drier/windier landscape
    - Many trees have died as they were not watered during drought
    - A significant amount of residential landscaping has shifted from irrigated lawn to xeriscape, this change is stressful to mature trees
    - Most trees are watered with sprinklers in parks
    - Reclaimed water is not used
    - Irrigation retrofits
    - Not all medians have irrigation
    - Many of the most important species to Davis are susceptible to emerging pests and pathogens and/or are not drought tolerant
    - Proactive management in areas of Davis with trees that have the highest risk of failure due to climate change and the associated stressors
20. Maintaining master tree list/climate ready species
    - Davis organizations/institutions have been leaders in climate ready species research
        - US Forest Service studies on species suitability started ~20 years ago
        - Tree Davis is wrapping up the community canopy project this year and have planted nearly 1,000 research backed climate ready tree species
        - The Arboretum is leading a research project on testing trees from Texas for potential use in our local urban forest
    - Climate ready trees are difficult to source
    - The optimal balance of non-native, native, and near-native species species
    - Concern there may not be many options for large stature, climate ready species
    - Monitor effects of drought on current inventory to determine tree species that are more tolerant to drought
21. Davis loves trees

- Trees are important in relation to other infrastructure
- The community wants transparency and wants to be involved
- The community has high expectations
- Engaged and active volunteer base
- Great appreciation for the many large and historic trees

22. Streamlining local government processes
    - Removals go to Tree Commission for deliberation, even when they are violating Code for "damaging infrastructure"
    - Many differing opinions make it so decisions are stalled and local government cannot move forward
        - This can result in costly damage to city infrastructure
    - Fees to cover staff time resulting from appeals to Tree Commission decisions
    - Landscape plans do not include signage then there are visibility issues with tree placement
    - Emphasize referencing policies and specifications in the Municipal Code to avoid frequent updates
23. UFMP congruence with guiding documents
    - Downtown plan does not consider trees, nor ways to modify planter sites to be more conducive to trees (it does include trees in the vision through graphic illustrations)
    - There is an opportunity to reiterate specific goals and objectives from the Climate Action & Adaptation Plan (CAAP) in the UFMP
    - A detailed inventory and tree plan for downtown
    - Goals will change within the 40 year UFMP planning horizon
    - Water management and creek restoration plans
24. Accessibility of information
    - Engage collaborators regularly (e.g., ad hoc advisory committee)
    - Some community members are not aware of the tree removal requirements
    - Some community members are not aware of the requirements to maintain/replant trees planted as part of landscape plans

- There is a desire for informational videos that residents can watch at their leisure
- There is a desire for hands on events that also foster urban forestry learning opportunities
- There is a desire for more information/education about tree planting location and how it relates to energy saving benefits
- Flowcharts for tree modification and tree removal process
- Increased public signage with messaging about trees

25. Partnerships/collaborations
    - Continuing or growing current partnerships with local non-profits
    - More engagement with local schools, the university, and arboretum
        - There is an opportunity to create clear partnerships with schools (e.g., field days, presentations, programming, school yard greening)
26. More robust information about the public tree inventory and the urban forest
    - Quantifying habitat value and energy savings of trees
    - Inventory private trees
    - Expanding the inventory to include more information about the site conditions (e.g., irrigation, planter space)
27. Tree Commission meetings (ideas that were not heard from collaborators)
    - The Commission wants to change their name to the Urban Forestry Commission
    - Interest in setting a tree canopy goal in the UFMP
        - Sacramento Tree Foundation's GreenPrint Initiative is no longer guiding tree canopy expansion goals in the region
    - There is a desire that the tree inventory attributes be publicly accessible
    - Options for public/volunteer involvement in updating the tree inventory
    - Tree Commission does not have a set of criteria that are followed when approving/denying tree removal requests
    - UC Davis is not a partner in the UFMP process
    - Forest connectivity for movement corridors
28. Tree Canopy

- Assessment of current tree canopy levels for smaller areas of the CIty is limited by lack of availability of GIS layers (e.g., sidewalks, bike baths/greenbelts, where people congregate in downtown areas, bus stops or areas near bus stops where people congregate, etc.)
- There is desire for a tree canopy goal
- There is a desire to model tree growth through time