



Board and Commission Study Issue Form

The Study Issues process is designed to assist City Council with setting priorities for the coming calendar year. Board and commission members have two roles in this process:

1. To advise Council regarding the identification of policy issues to study, within their relevant area of authority.
2. To advise Council on those issues Council has decided to study.

The study issues process should focus on considering a new or revised ordinance, new or expanded service delivery program, changes to existing Council Policy, or amendments to the General Plan. The Study Issues Form is designed to focus board and commissioner members' ideas on potential policy study issues and provide the opportunity for staff feedback and guidance in a transparent process.

Board or commissioners may only fill out a form for study issue ideas within their purview.

Date Submitted to Staff Liaison: 7/6/2021

Board/ Commission: Sustainability Commission

Submitted by: Kristel Wickham

Study Issue Working Title: Street Tree Repopulation with Equity Lens

1. What are the key elements of the issue? What precipitated this study?

During an Urban Forest Management Plan Update in February 2021, Commissioners became aware that the city has over 5,000 empty street tree spaces (more than when the UFMP was adopted in 2014). The urban canopy has not been measured since 2011 but cannot be expected to increase to the goal of 20.5% without filling these spots. The cost of planning, planting, watering, and lifetime trimming of street trees is significant, but is paid back in public health and environmental benefits (e.g., reduced heat island effect, improved air quality, lower crime rates, increased walking, and biking).

Key elements:

- Identify how to fill all vacant street tree locations within 5 years, and secure resources required.
- Prioritize areas with lower residential tree canopy such as in under-served neighborhoods or near multifamily dwellings in line with the new council priority of Diversity Equity and Inclusion.
- Evaluate software to track street trees (ref. Cupertino's GIS).

2. Staff Summary of Scope and/or Comments: [Staff Use Only]

This study would include a cost analysis for the required resources for filling in the 5,000 vacant street tree locations. It would also include a maintenance plan with associated ongoing costs and staff time that considers tree establishment and established tree maintenance. Watering to aid tree establishment is



Sunnyvale

Memorandum

critical and has been a barrier in the past for replacement street trees. This study would determine an affordable, best practice for watering newly planted trees for a certain duration until established.

To address the equity component, this study would include a cost analysis and strategy for targeting the tree repopulation in historically underserved neighborhoods, low-income neighborhoods, or neighborhoods that currently have the least amount of urban tree canopy. In addition, the study would examine a longer-term resource plan for maintaining trees in these neighborhoods, where residents may otherwise face hardships or challenges to maintain the tree themselves.

Currently the City uses Davey Resource Group's Tree Keeper for tracking street tree inventory. Due to COVID-19 pandemic related budget cuts and revenue shortfalls, tree inventory has been postponed. This study could investigate other, more cost-effective methods that may be available for tracking street tree inventory.