

# County of Santa Clara

Office of the County Executive

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DATE: April 1, 2020

TO: Honorable Members of the Board of Supervisors  
Jeffery V. Smith M.D, J.D., County Executive

FROM: Jasneet Sharma, Director, Office of Sustainability

**SUBJECT: Update on Canopy Outreach, Tree Planting and Urban Forest Programming**

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During the February 11, 2020 Board of Supervisors meeting (Item No. 28), Supervisor Simitian requested that the Office of Sustainability (OOS) provide additional information on Canopy's urban tree canopy programs and financial needs for a robust tree planting and stewardship program to be provided and implemented by Canopy in north County in support of building a comprehensive urban forest in Santa Clara County.

As per the three-year Tree Planting and Stewardship Pilot Program concept plan approved by the Board of Supervisors on Feb 11, 2020, Our City Forest will receive \$330,000 per year to plant and help steward 1000 trees annually and Canopy will receive \$25,000 per year to fund outreach and education programs in north County.

This Off-Agenda Report provides information, including programmatic details and costs on two important aspects of Canopy's urban forestry program: (1) Education and Outreach, and (2) Tree Planting and Stewardship.

## **1. Outreach and Education Program (Cost = \$65,930 per year)**

Canopy's education and outreach activities are implemented each year through a Community Forestry School program and an Urban Forestry Mini-Summit program. The Community Forestry School is an eight-week, evening adult course that equips community members with the knowledge, skills, and hands-on training needed to take immediate action in their community to advocate for, grow and maintain the urban forest. These classes are supplemented by eight weekend field experiences for hands-on practice. The Urban Forestry Mini-Summit is an annual event designed to equip professionals from government, non-governmental agencies, and private sector with the awareness and tools necessary to grow the

tree canopy in urban areas of Santa Clara County. Topics would include tree species selection, urban forestry planning, and public health.

The annual average cost to host these two programs is \$65,930 and would require \$197,790 over three years to fully fund these education and outreach activities to support tree planting and stewardship efforts.

## **2. Tree Planting and Stewardship Program (Cost = \$48,500 per year)**

Canopy's current program in the North County focuses on the Cities of Palo Alto and Mountain View, with which Canopy anticipates entering into service contracts for tree plantings soon. The contract with Palo Alto is expected to fund planting 200 trees per year for \$100,000 per year over a three-year period. The proposed scope of work with Mountain View will likely include four community tree planting events, mostly at Parks to plant between 50-100 trees and public education programs.

Canopy also works with and supports GreenTown Los Altos, a largely volunteer-based urban forestry group on the 500 Trees Campaign, an effort to increase the tree canopy in the north Santa Clara County cities of Los Altos and Los Altos Hills. Canopy reports that, historically, its planting program has the capacity to plant between 300 to 400 trees per year, based on funding availability.

Cost of planting a tree for Canopy can vary from \$600 to \$1,200 per site. Additional funding from the County would allow Canopy to utilize in-kind support from volunteers and leverage funding from other donors to offset tree planting costs. Hence, the annual average cost to supplement existing efforts and implement a comprehensive tree planting and stewardship initiative in areas of low or reduced tree canopy cover in Palo Alto, Los Altos, and Mountain View<sup>1</sup> would be \$48,500 per year or \$145,500 over three years.

At this proposed level of funding, over the course of three years, Canopy and its partners would plant and steward a total of 550 trees. Of those trees, 100 would be planted at Mountain View schools, which have a significantly low canopy coverage<sup>2</sup> compared to the citywide average and in other areas not covered in the upcoming service contract with Mountain View<sup>3</sup> and Palo Alto. These could include areas such as a 200-acre maintenance zone in Mountain View that averages only 11 percent canopy coverage. Four hundred fifty trees would be planted in Los Altos, which has recently lost a significant number of pines due to drought and disease, through a partnership with GreenTown Los Altos.

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<sup>1</sup> Based on a Google imagery tree canopy assessment, Mountain View has an average canopy cover of 21.2 percent, Palo Alto 36 percent, and Sunnyvale 14.3 percent. While the tree canopy in these cities is higher than other areas in the South and Central County that are averaging closer to 11 percent or lower, there are pockets or areas in all the aforementioned cities where the tree canopy is significantly lower than the city average.

<sup>2</sup> Graham, Huff, Crittenden, and Springer schools in Mountain View all have tree canopy coverage below 10 percent, and Mountain View High School is at 3.5 percent.

<sup>3</sup> There is a 200-acre maintenance zone in Mountain View defined by the City of Mountain View Forestry Division that averages only 11 percent canopy coverage compared to the citywide average of 21.2 percent.