

MOTION

One of the simplest ways to mitigate the impacts of rising temperatures driven by climate change at a neighborhood level is increasing the urban canopy. The Bureau of Street Services' (BSS) Office of Forest Management is currently analyzing the tree canopy of neighborhoods throughout the City of Los Angeles to develop the City's first Urban Forest Management Plan (UFMP) to chart a path forward for the City's urban canopy. From BSS's existing tree inventory to the Los Angeles Urban Forest Equity Assessment Report and the research done by University of Southern California's Lusk Center's Neighborhood Data for Social Change, we can see an observable reality verified: historically affluent neighborhoods have substantially more tree canopy and are therefore more protected from the effects of climate change.

The Bureau of Street Services Urban Forestry Division has guidelines for which trees can be planted and where, dictated by factors like proximity to a fire hydrant, intersection, driveway, bus stop, or overhead utility lines. Due to the potential for trees to interfere with electrical lines, current BSS Urban Forestry Division tree planting guidelines limit the potential size of tree species in neighborhoods with overhead utility lines to smaller species that provide less shade cover. Utility lines that hang over the public right of way are far more common in lower income, more racially diverse neighborhoods compared to historically wealthy and racially homogeneous neighborhoods which are far more likely to have utility lines placed underground. Similarly, there tends to be a greater density of driveways and bus stops in low income communities compared to wealthier areas, which further limits the City's ability to add street trees to those areas most in need of increased shade.

The UFMP will include neighborhood-level strategies to increase canopy cover to combat these inequities but, in order to best bolster the impact of this work, we must consider all of the limitations placed on tree planting in the public right of way and examine how we can tweak, limit, or modify all current city practices and restrictions to equitably increase tree canopy coverage across Los Angeles.

I THEREFORE MOVE to instruct the Bureau of Street Services, in coordination with the Bureau of Street Lighting, Bureau of Engineering, the Department of Water and Power, and the Department of Transportation, to report on all state and city laws, policies, and procedures currently in place that limit the size, location, and species of tree planting in the public right of way.

I FURTHER MOVE that the aforementioned report should clearly stipulate what is required by state and/or federal law and what is city policy that goes beyond state or federal standards.

I FURTHER MOVE that Bureau of Street Services report back with tree planting and spacing modifications, design solutions that can prevent trees from damaging underground infrastructure, as well as tree pruning guidelines, that can increase the amount and size of trees that can be planted on public right of way.

I FURTHER MOVE that the Bureau of Street Services, in coordination with the Bureau of Engineering and Department of City Planning, be instructed to report back on updating all relevant street standards to increase the minimum box size required for tree planting for streets with wider sidewalks in order to maximize tree canopy.

PRESENTED BY:

SECONDED BY:


KEVIN DE LEÓN
Councilmember, 14th District




OCT 09 2024

ORIGINAL