



Technical Advisory Council

Item 7: Case Study – Urban Forestry

August 22, 2025

Introduction

The City of East Palo Alto is a disadvantaged community in the San Francisco Bay Area region and a grantee of the CAL FIRE Urban & Community Forestry Program. Urban forestry projects in East Palo Alto provide notable examples of planning, engagement, partnerships, and workforce development that have obtained outstanding results. For example, the [soundwall planting project](#) with Canopy, East Palo Alto, and CAL FIRE had one of the highest survival rates of any urban tree planting project in California.

CAL FIRE Urban & Community Forestry Program

The mission of the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection's [Urban & Community Forestry Program](#) is to lead the effort to advance the development of sustainable urban and community forests in California. Trees provide energy conservation, reduce storm-water runoff, extend the life of surface streets, improve local air, soil and water quality, reduce atmospheric carbon dioxide, improve public health, provide wildlife habitat and increase property values. In short, they improve the quality of life in our urban environments which, increasingly, are where Californians live, work, and play. The program also administers State and Federal grants throughout California communities to advance urban forestry efforts.

Walter Passmore, the State Urban Forester for CAL FIRE, will present a statewide overview of urban and community forestry, discussing key metrics and drivers such as canopy cover, economics, workforce, water use, and policies.

City of East Palo Alto Grantee

On April 19, 2022, the East Palo Alto City Council adopted an [Urban Forest Master Plan](#) to provide a roadmap towards a shared vision for the future of the city's tree canopy. The Urban Forest Master Plan is a document that will guide urban forestry in East Palo Alto to maximize long-term climate, biodiversity and health benefits for the community and to ensure that urban forest management aligns with the City's strategic goals. This plan highlights existing needs and resources and presents recommendations to work toward a shared vision for a robust and equitable urban forest over the next 40 years. The Urban Forest Master Plan was funded by a grant from the California Department of Forestry and

Fire Protection (Cal Fire) and developed by the City, San Francisco Estuary Institute, HortScience | Bartlett Consulting, and Canopy, in consultation with members of the community.

Uriel Hernandez has been involved in many roles in East Palo Alto including project coordination, community engagement, and a term as a planning commissioner. He will discuss the natural resources projects, people, and policies that led to the success of the city's urban forestry efforts.

Discussion Questions

- [insert optional discussion questions for council]