

## City of Willits Urban Forestry Management Plan

### Community Meeting via Zoom

February 11, 2021, 4pm

#### Meeting Attendees

City of Willits: Dusty Duley, Jim Robbins, M

Dudek: Abby Beissinger, Scott Eckardt, Dana Link-Herrera

Community Members: Gretta Kanne, Janet Orth, Jim Xerogeanes, Tanya Musgrave, Jim Scheid, David Madrigal, Saprina Rodriguez, David Watts, Brian Bender, Mark Thompson, Aura Whittaker, Michelle Johnson

1. Introduction from Dusty Duley
  - City council has directed the City to develop UFMP for managing the City's trees
  - The City is interested to hear from the community regarding perspectives on trees, priorities, and community expectations to for the UFMP
  - UFMP is funded through a grant provided by CAL FIRE; Jim Robbins is responsible for overseeing grant funding for the plan
2. Existing Conditions/Key Findings and vision for the UFMP presented by Abby Beissinger
3. Community Input – Tree and Community Values. The conversation facilitated by Dudek and the City resulted in the following discussion, comments, and concerns presented by members of the community:

What do you value most about trees in the community?

What they would like the urban forest to look like in 20 years?

- Neighborhoods on the west side of town have many mature trees below utility lines, which have been trimmed into a "v" to avoid the lines. From an aesthetic perspective, it's clear this is not how trees should appear. Requested that the UFMP provide guidelines to property owners for proper tree pruning/maintenance practices.
- Typically trees in the parkway strip (i.e., between road and sidewalk) are not properly maintained or have resulted road/sidewalk damage, particularly along School Street near the intersection with West Commercial. Requested that the UFMP provide guidance to property owners for planting trees (i.e., right tree in the right place) to avoid damage.
- Areas identified as in need of trees: Highway 20, Miracle Mile (speaker commented that it is nearly unwalkable in the summer due to the lack of shade), downtown areas.
- Regarding species diversity, valley oaks in Rec Grove have a meaningful impact on the character of the park. Speaker indicated they are the "heart of that park".
- Neighborhoods on west side of the City have great canopy cover. Areas in the southern portion of the City, e.g., Harrah's Manor, are lacking canopy cover.
- Pruning and management strategies can be detrimental to tree health, structure, and appearance.
  - The UFMP can serve as a vehicle for addressing these types of issues. Standard urban forestry concepts such as the "right tree in the right place" will be discussed. The UFMP will provide recommendations for tree species,

tree placement, and tree maintenance to accommodate environmental constraints.

- Given the current number of trees contributing to the canopy cover on private property vs public property, how much will the City rely on private property to increase canopy cover? How much public space/public land is available for tree planting? Is there an interest/potential for trees to be added to public land or will it primarily be private landowners contributing to the increase in canopy cover?
- Regarding species diversity, what types of trees are you considering introducing to achieve no more than 5% of any one type of tree? Prefer to see native trees.
- Many trees in public ROW are currently causing damage to sidewalks/roads (e.g, redwood trees protruding into public ROW). It seems that projects often don't consider long term maintenance costs. As the UFMP is developed, how will the City plan for maintenance costs? Previously it has been very difficult to find funding for trees.
- Vision for 20 years from now: the heaviest canopy cover currently exists along riparian corridors in/near the City. Would like to see riparian zones expanded into surrounding areas that agricultural uses have since taken over, to the extent possible. Ideally, get things back to a more natural setting. Recognizing that indigenous trees are slow growing, would like to see indigenous forest return. It is anticipated that many cultivar trees will be incorporated; something similar to City of Davis would be nice to see in Willits.
  - Recognizing that there is a carrying capacity within any City, and only so much remaining public space, the City/UFMP would not expect the community members to bear brunt of increasing canopy cover. Rather, recognizing that there will be a time when City will run out of space for publicly managed trees, the City/UFMP is aiming to understand what could help private property owners become more interested in planting trees in their private yards? Incentives?
  - In order to make species recommendations, the UFMP will assess existing species within the City and identify the percentage of those species. Species recommendations will consider existing climate conditions, water requirements, presence of utility ROWs, pest and disease resistance, predicted climatic changes. Would not recommend removal of any species to reduce its percentage in the City. Rather, would recommend replacement with different species during planned tree removals (due to health, age, etc.).
  - Regarding funding/maintenance, one purpose of this meeting is to inform community of costs/resources needed to develop/maintain/expand the City's urban forest. Hopeful that the UFMP process will provide information on future costs. The City holds regular budget meetings and the public is encouraged to attend.
  - The UFMP process will look at expenditures for planting/maintenance/removal of trees and this information will be included in the UFMP.

What factors cause reluctance to planting trees on your property?

- Nothing would stop me from planting trees, but I hope the UFMP will provide some educational component to reduce reluctance of others to plant trees to show that the benefits outweigh the risks.
- Speaking from personal interactions with neighbors, some people remove beautiful trees due to allergies. Have also heard neighbors discuss all the factors Dudek stated as potential barriers to trees (maintenance, leaf litter, etc). There seems to be reluctance to planting trees within the community. Hope the UFMP will provide educational material to change this.

What barriers prevent you from planting, growing, maintaining trees at your residence/neighborhood/community?

What can the City do to help you have large, healthy trees?

Are there broad city-wide issues you see that have a negative impact on trees?

- Some of the trees planted in the last 15 years had irrigation removed during the drought (e.g., trees along Central Ave). Many city trees that have not had suckers removed, and low branches become a hazard. When city trees are improperly maintained it adds to perception that trees are a pain. Lack of tree maintenance by City affects public perception.
- All the values and benefits of trees are important. For shading and cooling, I would like to see many public parking spaces covered with solar photovoltaic canopies for renewable energy opportunities, and coordinate tree planting to be compatible with that or in other locations.
- Regarding County-owned facilities within the City, e.g., properties off East Valley St. and North Lenore Ave., where a lot of grading was completed for construction of buildings, but there are no plantings. How is city coordinating with other agencies to get them to buy in to the program?
  - The City has not yet reached out to County or other agencies but intends to do so. Recommending that the City establish certain standards for development to include trees, or replacement program
  - The UFMP will help the City develop tree ordinances and can require tree plantings with development
- Some people don't want trees on the street in front of their home or businesses because of lack of maintenance. When a City tree causes damage, the property owner has to pay for the cost or repairs beyond the sidewalk all the way to the curb.
- I'd love to see landscaping recommendations for new development, but even more than that we need to have a standard for maintenance so that developers don't just install trees/shrubs and then not give them what they need to become healthy mature specimens.
- The City required the developer of the Haehl Creek Court subdivision to set aside a strip of land for a trail. During development the area was over-graded beyond property lines, leaving blank spaces on this City-owned trail. Resident has planted trees there because it was evident the City did not intend to take responsibility for this strip of publicly owned land. Curious if City has changed their mind on this and if they would be willing to plant this area as a starting point and example to the community.

- Maintenance of trees seems to be low on City's priorities
  - UFMP will help identify funding sources for maintenance activities
- Trees have been damaged by drought, recent heavy snowfall and other threats. Let's take good care of our precious trees and continue to renew the urban forest!
- Are there active grant opportunities to provide funding for a program?
- How can community members get involved? Volunteer work? The City could consider starting its own tree nursery and grow its own trees.
- I would love a copy of this presentation emailed to me at [awhittaker@willitsnews.com](mailto:awhittaker@willitsnews.com).