

**Purpose of this Document**

This plan articulates strategic priorities of the Council for the next two years. It is the culmination of a four-month series of meetings led by the Planning and Funding Committee. Detailed action plans will be developed and periodically updated by committees of the Council.

**History**

The Urban Forest Council was formed from an earlier community group called the San Francisco Tree Advisory Board. In April of 2003, the Urban Forestry Council held their first meeting. The mission of the Urban Forestry Council is to guide the stewardship of San Francisco's trees by promoting a healthy and sustainable urban forest that benefits all San Franciscans while ensuring public health and safety.

UFC Ordinance and Scope: Codified in 2003, Chapter 12 of the Environment Code created the Urban Forestry Council, with the goal of improving forestry management and oversight, to enhance the size and health of San Francisco's urban forest. In 2008, the UFC membership was amended by ordinance to its current makeup with the goal of increasing the UFC's effectiveness.

Due to significant input by the Council, in 2006 the Landmark Tree Ordinance was passed to amend the Department of Public Works Code. The ordinance was championed by the UFC as a way to protect trees on private property. The UFC is identified as the first level review for Landmark Tree Applications and charges the UFC with making recommendations to the Board of Supervisors on whether the tree should be given Landmark Status, which provides the highest level of protection to trees in San Francisco.

In 2006 the UFC adopted the City's first Urban Forest Plan, which was developed under contract with HortScience. The modest budget for the project proved to be insufficient for the UFC's and the Planning Department's overall goals for the project. Following the UFC's adoption of the Urban Forest Plan, they passed a resolution in 2007 giving the responsibility for further development of the Urban Forest Plan to the Planning Department.

Current UFC annual projects include reviewing Landmark tree nominations, reviewing and updating the List of Recommended Street Trees and Annual State of the Urban Forest Report. The Council also reviews and provides comments on large-scale area plans and design elements on an ad-hoc basis.

## **TWO-YEAR PLAN**

The mission of the Urban Forest Council is quite broad and has led the Council over its first decade of existence to experiment with a variety of activities to serve this mission. The current Council sought to develop greater focus for its work. Building on background developed by the Planning and Funding Committee, work on a new Master Plan by the Planning Department and summaries of the history of the Council as well as stakeholder input put together by staff, the Urban Forest Council met in August, 2013 to create this two-year plan. In the course of discussion, three overarching themes were identified that will guide all Council actions. And after a process that elicited 14 possible goals, two broad goals with a total of five specific initiatives were selected.

### **Overarching Themes**

1. We are dedicated to building widespread commitment to the concept of the urban forest as a critical part of San Francisco's capital infrastructure.

*The value of the San Francisco urban forest is estimated at \$1.78 Billion – it is unique as a capital asset in that it appreciates in value over time. Nonetheless the awareness of the importance of the forest remains low and limits political support for increasing and maintaining the forest.*

2. The urban forest is not just trees – it includes a wide array of greening.

*The benefits that accrue from greenery include rainwater absorption, air quality improvement, aesthetic contribution and more. These benefits result from all types of living plant life, not just trees.*

3. As a Council – we are committed to becoming relevant.

*The Council is potentially an important catalyst for change, with a membership including representatives from key City Department representatives, nonprofit leaders, private sector leaders and at-large community members. In order to achieve greater impact we will reposition the Urban Forest Council as a center of expertise and influential advisory body to both government and private entities with respect to major policies and development projects that affect the urban forest.*

## **Specific Goals**

### **1. Increase funding for the forest**

*Without increased funding it will not be possible to even maintain the current forest. As the Planning Department has documented, San Francisco's "canopy" is less than half that of most major cities. Thus, the Council is committed to finding ways over the next two years to contribute to raising more funds.*

#### **a. Initiate a "Funding Clearing House" for City Departments**

*This is a role that used to be played by a City Hall staff person. When this staff position was eliminated, a void was created in supporting SF Departments to jointly identify, prioritize and take action on responding to funding opportunities. Providing a forum for information sharing, and development of common priorities is seen as highly valuable by several City Departments. The mechanics of playing this role and setting targets for additional funding to be raised will be the first priority of the Funding Committee.*

#### **b. Play a leadership role in supporting other efforts to generate funding.**

*The Council anticipates other efforts to generate funding for growing and maintaining the urban forest. For example the feasibility of a campaign to pass a parcel tax for this purpose is underway currently. Just how the Council can best contribute will be determined based on the circumstances of each effort.*

### **2. Drive the creation of sound policy regarding the Urban Forest**

*Currently the Council's role in various public and private developments is ad hoc at best. While the Council may not play an analogous role to the City Planning Commission soon, the Council will proactively seek to review and comment on all major developments and begin to build the expectation that any major project requires Council input.*

#### **a. Assist in completion and passage of new Urban Forest Master Plan:**

*Both individual Council members and the Council as a whole have been supportive of the Planning Department in the drafting process of the Master Plan. This is clearly a high visibility and high impact policy document and is naturally a very high priority for the Council in the coming year.*

#### **b. Develop a "roundtable" process for policy review on critical issues**

*Many issues and controversies surface during the course of a year regarding the forest. For example there is a major debate over plans by UCSF and the Mount Sutro Forest. However, there is no forum where these issues can be debated in a constructive manner. The Council will experiment with creating an ongoing "roundtable" function where important issues can be debated and policy implications developed.*

#### **c. Play an active role in reviewing all major projects**

*The Policy Committee will work on the definition of what constitutes "major projects" and determining the level of review that can be consistently delivered.*

### **Urban Forest Council Management Goals**

In order to pursue the overarching themes and two broad goals, the Council saw the need to restructure its committees. Currently there are two committees – Planning and Funding, and the Landmark Tree Committee. The Landmark Tree will continue as an ad hoc committee and two new committees will be formed: Funding Committee and Policy Committee. Membership and Chairs for each committee has been determined.

Council leadership in partnership with SFE staff will focus on three priorities in support of growing the relevance and influence of the Council:

1. Strengthen relationships with key decision makers
2. Develop stable funding for UFC
3. Invest in Council knowledge – ongoing

In addition, it is understood that the Council will continue to:

4. Produce the annual report, and
5. Produce the annual tree list.

### **SFE Staff Support**

Funding for staff support of the Council has dwindled over the last few years. The Council recognizes that staff support will need to be carefully allocated in order not to over commit. Over time, the Council seeks to increase its annual budget in order to expand staff support.

### **COMMITTEE STRUCTURE**

- |                        |  |
|------------------------|--|
| 1. Funding             | William (Chair), Dan K. Sandy, Carla, Dan F.;<br><i>2nd Tuesday; 4PM at City Hall</i>                  |
| 2. Policy and Planning | Andrew (Chair), Dan F., Jon S., John L., VACANT SEAT<br><i>1st Tuesday; 4PM at Planning Department</i> |
| 3. Landmark Trees      | Rose, Malcolm, Larry<br><i>Meet Ad Hoc on 1st Thursday; 4PM at City Hall</i>                           |

### **Next Steps**

By the November 2013 UFC full Council meeting, each of the two standing committees will develop specific detailed action plans based on the goals and associated suggested action items. These action plans will identify metrics to track success for each action item as well as resources needed to achieve success, including UFC member roles and requested staffing support from SFE:

- d. The Funding Committee will be responsible for Goal 1 - **Increase funding for the forest**
- e. The Planning and Policy Committee will be responsible for Goal 2 - **Drive the creation of sound policy regarding the Urban Forest**