

San Diego Regional Urban Forests Council

.....a member driven coalition of agencies, businesses and educators
working to improve our urban forest assets.

www.sdrufc.com

Regional Council of the California Urban Forests Council
PO Box 823, Novato, CA 94948



May 26, 2020

Open letter to Mayors, Councilmembers, City Departments, and Community Leaders:

Subject: Tree Maintenance is an Essential Service

In adjusting municipal budgets to declining revenues, the San Diego Regional Urban Forests Council urges you to continue tree maintenance programs to maintain healthy trees, protect public safety, reduce liabilities and lawsuits, and increase tree canopy.

Tree maintenance keeps trees healthy and reduces city liabilities.

Healthy trees are essential public assets. Like all City assets, they require regular maintenance. If cities fail to follow tree industry maintenance schedules (7 to 10 years), their liabilities multiply from damage to property or life. Lawsuits and settlement payments can dwarf any reductions in annual maintenance budgets.

Routine tree pruning identifies and removes high risk trees and branches, lengthens tree life, addresses infrastructure conflicts when they are small, and reduces tree failures. Palm trimming removes the fruit and fronds that create risks for fires, trips, and falls.

Healthy trees can better resist drought and such pests as the gold spotted oak borer and shot hole borer. Weakened trees are at risk during storms and high winds. Mortality is increasing from the South American Palm Weevil, and dead Canary Island date palms need to be removed.

Trees cool cities, as climate changes accelerate.

Maintaining existing healthy trees and planting new trees are essential investments in climate adaptation and carbon sequestration. Trees are affordable and amazing ways to cool neighborhoods, provide wildlife habitat, absorb stormwater and urban pollutants, and offer co-benefits.

Tree planting is an important component of most Climate Action Plans, and tree maintenance is one of the most cost effective investments in climate action and climate plan implementation.

Trees will buffer the next healthy and environmental crisis.

This is not the time to disregard the nature that sustains us. Covid-19 is showing us how quickly health and economic impacts can result from natural causes—and climate impacts are already upon us even if generally unnoticed. The next natural disaster may seem like another surprise, but healthy trees will be resilient and need to be there to serve San Diegans.

The pandemic has highlighted inequity in disadvantaged communities. They are more vulnerable to health and economic impacts and less prepared than advantaged communities. Disadvantaged communities typically have low tree canopy coverage. Increasing tree plantings in these areas can positively impact health and bring socio-economic benefits to these—and all—communities.

Anne S. Fege, Ph.D., MBA, Executive Committee Member, afege@sdrufc.com 858-472-1293