



The City of Austin Urban Forestry Board

May 15, 2013

The Honorable Mayor Lee Leffingwell and Austin City Council Members

Mayor Leffingwell and Council Members:

Trees, increasingly shown as critical elements in humanizing an urban environment, are essential in maintaining Austin as the most liveable city in the country. Austin's rapid population growth is placing increasing demands on our forest infrastructure; this intense urbanization creates a greater need for green infrastructure and also creates more stress on the plants and trees that provide these vital benefits to the city.

Recent weather events, particularly the drought of 2011, have caused an unprecedented loss of public trees in Austin. This loss has left many dead trees standing, which has created a risk to public safety. We have had a significant loss of our green canopy in a time of increasing need for the benefits provided by trees. Austin spends an average of one-third of the national average per capita per tree. Meanwhile, Austin's rapid growth has resulted in a 42% increase in tree service demand per year for the last 7 years, making that spending gap worse.

In an effort to address the serious and urgent challenges affecting Austin's public trees, The Urban Forestry Board strongly urges the Mayor and Council to approve funding for the "Enhanced Forestry Functions" in the unmet service demand in the FY 2013-14 Budget. Further, we recommend that critical Forestry funding be considered a priority in future budgets.

Recommendation #: 20130515-G2

Date Approved By UFB: May 15, 2013

Approved by Urban Forestry Board members 6-0. Board member vanTreeck absent.

Robert Clawson
Staff Liaison
Urban Forestry Board

CC: Sara Hensley, Director, Austin PARD
Bert Lumbreras, Assistant City Manager
Marc Ott, City Manager
Urban Forestry Board members