

**Staff Liaison**  
Stephen Prée | 510-559-7685  
spree@ci-el-cerrito.ca.us

## AGENDA

### REGULAR MEETING OF THE URBAN FOREST COMMITTEE

**Monday November 10, 2025, at 7:00 p.m.**

El Cerrito City Hall  
City Council Chambers  
10890 San Pablo Avenue  
El Cerrito, CA 94530

**This Meeting Place is Wheelchair Accessible**

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#### **7:00 p.m. CONVENE REGULAR MEETING**

- 1. ROLL CALL** – Chair Robin Mitchell, Vice-Chair Randi Jiménez; Members: Akhil Iyer, Robert Hrubes, Jennifer Kaczor, Yan Linhart
- 2. ORAL COMMUNICATIONS FROM THE PUBLIC and INTRODUCTION BY INDIVIDUALS INTERESTED IN SERVING ON THE ADVISORY BOARD**  
*Remarks are typically limited to three minutes per person and may be on anything within the subject matter jurisdiction of the body. Remarks on non-agenda items will be heard first, remarks on agenda items will be heard at the time the item is discussed.*
- 3. COMMITTEE MEMBER COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION EXCHANGE / CHANGES TO THE MEETING AGENDA/ (10 minutes)**
- 4. CITY COUNCIL / STAFF LIAISONS ANNOUNCEMENTS AND REPORTS - (10 minutes)**  
City Council Liaison Ktsanes and / or City Staff may report on Council policies, priorities, and significant actions taken by the City Council, and / or matters of general interest to the Urban Forest Committee (UFC).
- 5. APPROVAL OF MINUTES (3 minutes)** Consider motions to adopt the minutes of the September 8, 2025, meeting.
- 6. INFORMAL INTERVIEW WITH RECENT UFC APPLICANTS- (15 minutes)** Participate in an interview with Committee applicants and consider possible recommendations to City Council for appointment.
- 7. COLLABORATION WITH THE ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY COMMITTEE - (3 minutes)** Hear updates, participate in discussion, and consider possible action items regarding collaborating with the EQC.

**8. COLLABORATION WITH THE PARK AND RECREATION COMMISSION-**  
(3 minutes) Hear updates, participate in discussion, and consider possible action items regarding collaborating with the PRC.

**9. URBAN FOREST COMMITTEE ACTIVITIES, CALENDAR, AND WORK PLAN-**  
(90 minutes) Hear updates, participate in discussion, and consider possible actions that correspond with development of the Urban Forest Committee Work Plan and calendar of events.

- A. Introduction to the Arbor Day Foundation’s “Tree Board Handbook” and relevant City of El Cerrito ordinances (Prée)
- B. Arbor Week Planning (*Kaczor, Mitchell, all*)
- C. City Tree Planting Fee Discussion (*Jiménez, all*)
- D. UFC Work Plan Implementation Strategy

**10. ITEMS FROM TONIGHT’S MEETING THAT REQUIRE FURTHER ACTION**  
(3 minutes)

**11. FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS-** hear committee member suggestions for future UFC meeting items (3 minutes)

- UFC Work Plan Implementation Strategy
- Arbor Day Planning
- Review the Arbor Day Foundation’s “Tree Board Handbook”
- Annual UFC Budget Allocation

**12. ADJOURNMENT**

In compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, if you need special assistance to participate in this meeting, please contact the Staff Liaison, 510-559-7685. Notification 48 hours prior to the meeting will enable the City to make reasonable arrangements to ensure accessibility to this meeting. (28 CFR 35.102-35.104 ADA Title I).

Any writings or documents provided to a majority of the members regarding any item on this agenda will be made available for public inspection at El Cerrito Recycling Center during normal business hours.



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**DRAFT MINUTES**  
**REGULAR MEETING OF THE**  
**Urban Forest Committee**  
**Monday September 8, 2025 7:00 p.m.**

El Cerrito City Hall  
City Council Chambers  
10890 San Pablo Avenue  
El Cerrito, CA 94530

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**This Meeting Place is Wheelchair Accessible**

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**CONVENE REGULAR MEETING:** Chair *Robin Mitchell* called the meeting to order at 7:05 p.m.

1. **ROLL CALL:** Present: Chair Robin Mitchell, Vice chair Randi Jiménez; members: Akhil Iyer, Robert Hrubes, Jennifer Kaczor, Yan Linhart. Also present: Members of the Public Melanie Brandon, Rahul Iyer, Audrey Liese, Sandra Sprague, Jody Welch, Council Liaison William Ktsanas, and Staff Liaison Stephen Prée
2. **ORAL COMMUNICATIONS FROM THE PUBLIC:** There were none.
3. **COMMITTEE MEMBER COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION EXCHANGE / CHANGES TO THE MEETING AGENDA:** *Prée* recommended a change to the agenda, removing item 6, as the applicant is unable to attend this meeting. *Chair Mitchell* announced that the City of Richmond is voting for an official City tree species. *Vice Chair Jiménez* announced that September 9, 2025 is California's state birthday (175 years).
4. **COUNCIL / STAFF LIAISONS ANNOUNCEMENTS AND REPORTS:** *Council Liaison William Ktsanes* provided a brief update on the City budget and answered questions. *Staff Liaison Prée* reported on an outbreak of California oak worm that has affected local coast live oak trees. He also reported on the recent increase in City fees for planting trees per the City's 2025/26 Master Fee Schedule.
5. **APPROVAL OF MINUTES:** June 9, 2025 - **Motion:** *Mitchell*; **2<sup>nd</sup>:** *Hrubes*; unanimous. July 14, 2025- **Motion:** *Mitchell*; **2<sup>nd</sup>:** *Hrubes*; unanimous.
6. **INFORMAL INTERVIEW WITH RECENT UFC APPLICANTS-** rescheduled.
7. **COLLABORATION WITH THE ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY COMMITTEE –** *Chair Mitchell* reported that the EQC had not met since the previous UFC meeting.
8. **COLLABORATION WITH THE PARK AND RECREATION COMMISSION-** *Kaczor* reported that the PRC is compiling the results of their July 4 public survey, focusing on fundraising, and reaching out to community groups.

## 9. URBAN FOREST COMMITTEE ACTIVITIES, CALENDAR, AND WORK PLAN UPDATE:

- A. Ad-hoc Subcommittee for the Friends of the HNA- *Chair Mitchell* led a discussion on potential conservation activities and on various methods and challenges with the propagation of meadow grasses. A discussion yielded the formation of an ad-hoc group of volunteers- *Akil Iyer, Rahul Iyer, Sandra Sprague* volunteered to participate.
- B. UFC Work Plan Implementation- *Kaczor* recommended starting the implementation with a focus on Arbor Week, and volunteered to review and draft a summary of the Arbor Day Tool Kit and distribute it for UFC discussion in a future meeting. *Linhart* reminded the UFC that any Arbor Day program at the EC Library would require advanced coordination with library staff. *Jiménez* offered to draft outreach communication. *Chair Mitchell* suggested working on fundraising with *Prée*.
- C. Review the Arbor Day Foundation’s “Tree Board Handbook”- deferred to a future meeting by staff.

## 10. ITEMS FROM TONIGHT’S MEETING THAT REQUIRE FURTHER ACTION:

- *Linhart* announced his resignation, after nearly 10 years serving on the Urban Forest Committee, due to his imminent relocation away from the City of El Cerrito. UFC members unanimously thanked Yan for his valued service.
- *Kaczor* will circulate a summary of recommendations from the Arbor Day Toll Kit
- *Prée* will send applicant Valerie Mih’s resume to UFC per her request

## 11. FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS –

- Arbor Day Toolkit/ Arbor Day 2026
- Arbor Day Foundation “Tree Board Handbook”
- El Cerrito Public Tree Ordinance
- UFC Work Plan Implementation

## 12. ADJOURNMENT- *Chair Mitchell* adjourned the meeting at 8:42 p.m.

This is to certify that the foregoing is a true and correct copy of the minutes of the regular Urban Forest Committee meeting of September 8, 2025, as approved by the Urban Forest Committee.

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Chair Robin Mitchell

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Stephen Prée, Staff Liaison

# Arbor Week 2026 planning

## **Draft goals/outcomes for Arbor Week 2026, with potential activities:**

*Narrow down to three goals in order of importance*

1. Increase tree inventory by planting trees and determining maintenance plans
  - a. Cerrito Vista, Centennial, Castro parks (high-profile, public, already have maintenance)
2. Increase community awareness of: How-to and requirements for planting, maintaining, pruning, and removal of El Cerrito trees in parking strips
  - a. Green Happenings newsletter
  - b. Other city publications and social media
  - c. Distribute postcards to all residents explaining the tree planting process with QR code linked to city web page
3. Engage community groups where applicable for collaboration, participation, and spreading awareness
  - a. Garden Club, 4-H, Eagle Scouts, EC High School Environmental Group, local schools, PRC
4. Increase awareness for and appreciation of, and knowledge of trees
  - a. Library presentations for kids
  - b. Library presentation for adults
    - i. Consult librarians about adult presentations – emulate Kensington gardening presentations (UC MG of Contra Costa County); consider options of preregistration, webinar vs. in person

## **Draft success metrics:**

*What can we measure to know if we were successful, and could build on for the following year(s)?*

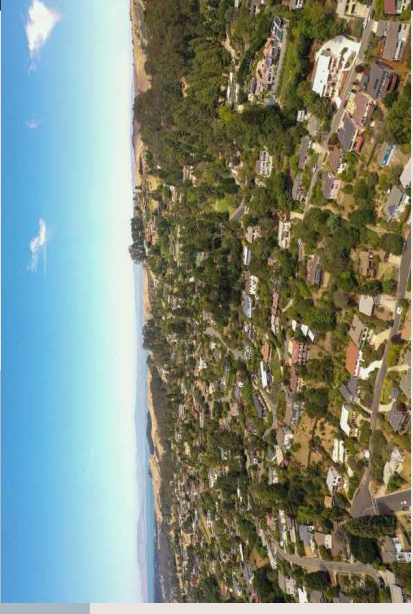
- # event participants
- # community groups involved
- # messaging impressions (social media, newsletters, etc.)
- # trees planted with maintenance planned
- \$ funds raised (maybe)

### **November 10 UFC meeting:**

- Hear new or adjusted goals and activities from UFC
- Each UFC member votes for top 3 goals to focus on
- UFC members sign up to plan or participate in activities, or to come up with new activities supporting a goal; Consider:
  - Funding needed
  - Materials needed
  - Labor needed
  - Stephen time needed
  - Potential for attendee interest and participation

### **Draft plan for December 8 UFC meeting:**

- Each member who has signed up for an activity shares a draft plan for advancing it
- (Possibly finalize plan if it doesn't get done in November meeting)



## WHAT WE DO

- ✓ Advise the City on tree policies, planting, and care
- ✓ Support Arbor Week & community events
- ✓ Promote education on tree safety, selection, and maintenance

*Your voice can shape our city's forest. Join us and help El Cerrito thrive!*

## TIME

## COMMITMENT

- A few hours each month for meetings
- Optional volunteering at tree plantings & events
- No experience needed — just a love of trees!

## WHY JOIN?

- ❖ Shape the future of El Cerrito's trees and green spaces
- ❖ Work with neighbors who care about sustainability
- ❖ Help make our city healthier, safer, and more beautiful

# HELP GROW EL CERRITO'S URBAN FOREST!

# GET INVOLVED TODAY!



# Urban Forestry Committee Recommendation: Sliding-Scale Fee Structure for Street Tree Planting

To: El Cerrito City Council

From: Urban Forestry Committee

Date: [Insert Date]

Subject: Recommendation to Adjust Tree Planting Fees for Equity and Access

## Background

In the FY 2025–26 Master Fee Schedule, the cost for city-facilitated street tree planting was increased to \$1,306 per tree to achieve a 100% cost recovery model. While this ensures the City of El Cerrito does not divert resources from ongoing tree maintenance, it has created a barrier for some residents who cannot afford this fee. El Cerrito is an economically diverse community, and equitable access to tree planting is essential to achieving citywide canopy, climate resilience, and public health goals.

## Committee Recommendation

We recommend the City Council adopt a sliding-scale fee structure for tree planting that:

- Preserves full cost recovery in aggregate so that maintenance funding is not reduced.
- Provides equitable access for households across income levels.
- Allows residents with greater means to contribute more, supporting plantings for neighbors with fewer resources.

## Proposed Fee Tiers

\*(Based on Contra Costa County HUD 2025 income limits for a 4-person household)

### Tier Household Income Fee per Tree Notes

Support Tier	>100% AMI (>\$160K)	\$1,600+	Pays above cost; <i>surplus funds Tree Equity Fund</i>
Full-Cost Tier	~100% AMI (~\$160K)	\$1,306	Pays exact cost
Moderate-Income Tier	≤ 80% AMI (≤ \$125K)	\$800	Reduced rate for moderate-income households
Low-Income Tier	≤ 50% AMI (≤ \$79.9K)	\$400	Heavily subsidized for low-income households

## Funding Mechanisms

- *Tree Equity Fund*: Surplus contributions from Support Tier residents and optional donations.
- Partnerships: Local nonprofits, businesses, and civic groups to co-fund plantings.

## Benefits

- Equity: Ensures all residents can participate in tree planting.
- Sustainability: Maintains 100% cost recovery for the City of El Cerrito.
- Flexibility: Tiered model can be adjusted annually based on demand and funding.
- Community Engagement: Encourages wealthier residents and local businesses to actively support El Cerrito's tree canopy goals.

## Next Steps

1. Council consideration of a pilot sliding-scale program for FY 2025–26.
2. Development of simple income-verification guidelines (leveraging existing utility or benefits programs).
3. Re-establishment of the Tree Equity Fund (UFC account) to manage surplus contributions and external funding.

Urban Forestry Committee  
[Signatures or names of committee members]