

# STRATEGIC PLAN

2019 – 2022



Greening San Francisco

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*"Trees keep us alive! As human beings we couldn't live without trees. They're precious and they're important aesthetically and spiritually, but they do give us almost everything we need to live on earth."*

**~Meg Lowman, Ph.D.,** *Chief of Science & Sustainability, California Academy of Sciences*



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## 1. Executive Summary

In the 38 years since our founding, Friends of the Urban Forest (FUF) has become recognized as a national leader in community-based urban forestry. FUF's roles in developing San Francisco's ambitious Urban Forest Plan and in securing dedicated funding for the maintenance of San Francisco's street trees through a ballot initiative stand out among the organization's greatest accomplishments.

In 2019, FUF has reached a critical inflection point. We are poised to achieve our highest priority: Creation of a dedicated funding source for planting so we can grow our street tree population. Given the harsh reality of the climate crisis and its potential local impact, a fully-stocked urban forest is vital for the health and well-being of our city.





We also face challenges. By eliminating our fee-for-service income and adapting our business model, the Healthy Trees and Safe Sidewalks Initiative (Prop E) created a need for FUF to diversify its funding sources and reduce its dependence upon public financing. FUF must address the challenges of growing programs and staff, and provide meaningful leadership in the use of urban forestry as a climate crisis mitigation strategy.

Over the next three years, FUF will carry out its updated mission of bringing neighbors together to plant and care for San Francisco’s ideal urban forest, while adhering to our values of community engagement, education and stewardship, quality of work, inclusion, and environmental justice.

In pursuit of our overall objective to improve San Francisco’s urban forest, FUF’s strategic plan for 2019-2022 addresses goals and strategies for securing robust new funding for tree planting, mobilizing public demand and support for urban forest expansion, building systems and infrastructure to enable and support an expansion of San Francisco’s greening efforts, and continuing to expand our leadership in urban forestry.







## 2. Vision, Mission, Values

### VISION

San Francisco's urban forest is thriving and provides the greatest possible benefits to the environment, people, and future generations.

### MISSION

We bring neighbors together to plant and care for San Francisco's ideal urban forest.

### VALUES

#### Community Engagement

FUF has a long history of integrating urban greening with civic engagement as a way to increase community health and resilience. We strive to connect San Franciscans to nature and to each other.





## Education and Stewardship

We are committed to serving as the leading resource for San Franciscans who are interested in urban forestry-related issues and/or developing a career in urban forestry.

We cultivate future generations of stewards and advocates for San Francisco's urban forest, and leaders and professionals in urban forestry.

## Quality of Work

FUF is an organization of professionals who take pride in making a high-quality, long-term impact on San Francisco's infrastructure and environment. Our planting and pruning methods are based on best practices as designated by industry leaders such as the International Society of Arboriculture.

## Inclusion

FUF recognizes San Francisco's many communities and cultures and the diverse ways in which they connect with our urban forest. We are committed to inclusion and developing a meaningful relationship with anyone interested in greening our city.

## Environmental Justice

FUF is committed to equitable access and decision-making in urban greening as a key to growing resilient communities and sharing the climate and health benefits of a robust urban forest throughout San Francisco.





### 3. Current Situation Assessment

#### INFLECTION POINT

Friends of the Urban Forest was founded 38 years ago after the City cut the budget for planting street trees. Since then FUF's major focus has been on planting and caring for urban street trees. Ten years ago we began planting sidewalk gardens, expanding our reach to build what we call the "understory" of our urban forest.

For more than 20 years FUF has sought new ways to engage all of San Francisco's communities, starting with the creation of the youth tree care program now known as Green Teens. Several years ago we launched a workforce development program in partnership with San Francisco General Hospital's Wraparound Project to employ victims of violent crime for six month periods; this is now our Green Crew program, which provides permanent, part-time employment and training in urban forestry for young adults with minimal work history.



In our 2010 Strategic Plan, our three major goals were: to fundamentally change San Francisco's public policy around street trees, to maximize our greening efforts, and to build our financial and operational infrastructure.

In line with these goals, FUF was an integral partner in writing the 2014 San Francisco Urban Forest Plan, which called for planting 6,000 trees per year over 20 years to fully stock our streets. FUF's role under the plan is to plant 2,000 of those trees annually.

In 2016 we were wildly successful in our advocacy work with the passage of the Healthy Trees and Safe Sidewalks ballot initiative (Proposition E). With support of almost 80% of the electorate we helped usher in a renewed commitment to the care of street trees with permanent public funding.



And in the last few years we have determined that FUF needs to be a leader in growing the “whole urban forest.” One of the ways we can achieve this holistic goal would be to increase trees in parks and backyards and on other private property. In 2018 at the Global Climate Action Summit in San Francisco the central importance of urban forests in fighting climate change was highlighted and FUF was featured as a national leader in this strategy.

We have made enormous progress over the past four decades. FUF has truly lived up to its name: friend (and champion) of the urban forest! Operationally, over the last year and a half, we have invested in our human and physical infrastructure in order to be able to plant 2,000 trees per year—more than at any other time in over a decade—and we currently have more than \$2.2 million in liquid assets.

Where are we today? Not resting on our laurels!

We knew that the success of Prop E would fundamentally change and challenge our business model, our planting model, and the scope of our work. If we are to powerfully execute on our expanded vision to grow the “whole urban forest” (not just street trees) we must intensify our efforts. Fortunately, our higher profile and excellent reputation bolster our ability to achieve our objectives.

And in light of our recent success in garnering three-year grants from both the State and the City, FUF can now commit to planting a minimum of 6,000 trees over the next three years.

So FUF is at a critical inflection point. As the “Lorax” of San Francisco we continue to “speak for the trees.” Building on our successes, we are poised to increase our contribution to San Francisco’s urban forest. We will continue our advocacy efforts to achieve our highest priority: creation of a dedicated funding source for planting so we can grow our street tree population,

## CURRENT CHALLENGES

This strategic plan addresses the following challenges:

- By eliminating our fee-for-service income, Prop E has created a need for FUF to diversify its funding sources and reduce its dependence upon public financing.
- Prop E has fundamentally changed our planting model; we need to adapt.
- Address the challenges of growing programs and staff.
- Provide meaningful leadership in the use of urban forestry as a climate crisis mitigation strategy.



while expanding our vision to drive growth of the urban forest in other public and private property. Given the harsh reality of the climate crisis and its potential local impact, a fully-stocked urban forest is vital for the health and well-being of our city. And by cultivating stewards of the environment through urban forestry, we can contribute to the health and well-being of the planet.



## 4. Program Objectives 2019 to 2022

Our overall objective: Transform San Francisco's urban forest by increasing tree canopy through community planting, removing the maximum possible amount of impermeable surface through sidewalk landscaping, and continuing our educational and community engagement programs to create new stewards of the urban forest.

Note: All strategies and measurements are for the three-year period unless otherwise identified.

### 4.1. OBJECTIVE: SECURE ROBUST NEW FUNDING FOR GROWING THE URBAN FOREST.

#### Background:

- Under our new financial model, FUF has become more dependent upon public financing.
- Prop E only funds the care of trees after the tree has been established after three years.
- Therefore dedicated public funding is a goal alongside the goal of continuing to build our own philanthropic capacity.

**Goal:** Secure \$9 million additional dollars annually in public funding to fully fund the planting of 6,000 street trees (including replacement of trees lost) each year for 20 years per our 2014 Urban Forest Plan.

**Goal:** Grow annual giving to a sustainable minimum of \$1.5 million annually.

**Goal:** Create inspiring platforms for giving including a 40th Anniversary campaign.

**Goal:** Secure a stable revenue platform for the future through a \$2 million legacy fund.





## 4.2. OBJECTIVE: MOBILIZE PUBLIC DEMAND AND SUPPORT FOR GROWING THE URBAN FOREST.

### Background:

- FUF remains committed to community-based urban forestry, training and educating tree stewards, and furthering the profession of urban forestry.
- Changes in FUF's planting model due to the passage of Prop E require changes in FUF's community engagement model; we must commit to ongoing experimentation and innovation with our outreach and engagement activities.
- Partnerships with government officials, community organizations, and community members will be critical to our success.

**Goal:** Develop community engagement model to provide sufficient volunteer and community support of FUF's annual planting goals.

**Goal:** Increase community and property owner support.

**Goal:** Deepen institutional relationships with key partners.



## 4.3. OBJECTIVE: BUILD SYSTEMS AND INFRASTRUCTURE NEEDED FOR GROWING THE URBAN FOREST.

### Background:

- With the advent of StreetTreeSF, multiple large government grants, and increasing annual tree planting goals, FUF must scale up administrative systems and infrastructure to improve its efficiency and accuracy in data collection, project management, and grant reporting.
- FUF has excelled at implementing best practices for tree planting. Recent improvements (i.e. mulching and watering on planting day) continue to improve the quality of our work. We must also ensure that efficiency, safety, and staff well-being are re-evaluated and updated as needed.
- To meet both our internal needs and the requirements of funders, BUF, contractors, and large government grants such as StreetTreeSF, FUF must be able to collect, analyze, manage, and share data.

**Goal:** Improve existing administrative systems and infrastructure and develop new ones as needed.

**Goal:** Improve existing policies and practices that address employee engagement and retention, and develop new ones as needed.

**Goal:** Expand or improve physical facilities as needed.

#### 4.4. OBJECTIVE: CONTINUE TO ADVANCE THE PRACTICE OF URBAN FORESTRY.

##### Background:

- Coming into our 40th year FUF has proved that it is well respected and loved in San Francisco; we are increasingly seen as a leader on the national and international level.
- Over the last decade we have shown that we are innovators in community-based urban forestry and community building.
- We have proved to be successful advocates and partners with the City in driving public funding and investment in San Francisco's urban forest.
- We are participating in national and international dialogue about urban forestry and the role urban forestry plays in the health of a modern city, and as an important strategy in combating climate change.
- In past strategic plans we have developed new and innovative programming in sidewalk landscaping and education, and our commitment to those programs continues.



**Goal:** Consider innovative projects such as carbon credits, green jobs training, a backyard tree program, tree watering, and concrete removal.

**Goal:** Continue to invest in our sidewalk landscaping program, leveraging our recent success.

**Goal:** Continue to invest in our education and workforce development programs, leveraging our recent success.

**Goal:** Continue to promote equity and diversity at FUF.

**Goal:** Solidify and expand the leadership role FUF has built as a community-based advocate for the whole urban forest.





## Acknowledgements

The Strategic Planning process included the following board and staff members:

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