



## STATEMENT

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**May 6, 2010:**

### **Palo Alto Tree Program Threatened by Proposed Budget Cuts**

*By Catherine Martineau, Executive Director*

As the City tries to fill the projected \$7.3 M budget gap in 2011, I've attended City Council and budget outreach meetings where I expressed Canopy's concerns over several cost-cutting proposals that threaten the health of City-owned trees. The proposals are:

**1) Eliminating 4 full time in-house tree trimmer positions and replacing them with contractors.** *In-house tree trimmers are skilled, dedicated tree technicians who perform a variety of tasks in addition to pruning and line clearing such as tree planting and young tree care. It is unclear how much money could be saved by doing this, but there is no doubt that contracting these tasks out will result in an inferior level of service and thus could lead to a gradual deterioration of the condition of the trees.*

**2) Transferring the responsibility of sidewalk repair to homeowners.** *Experts such as Barrie Coate, renowned Bay Area Consulting Arborist, and George Gonzalez, Chief Forester, City of Los Angeles, have repeatedly warned that this shift invariably leads to a decline of the forest. More trees are removed, tree roots are damaged by contractors that often do not respect City specs. and generally more residents refuse street trees in front of their property.*

**3) Reducing the budget for purchasing trees.** *An average of 200 city trees are planted in Palo Alto every year-already less than the 1,200 recommended by the City's Comprehensive Plan in order to renew the forest.*

Thanks to the new street tree inventory we'll soon know the actual value of the benefits that this forest provides every year. The dollar amounts will be substantial and will surprise many. Let's hope that no shortsighted decision is made in the meantime.

The City of Palo Alto is facing the difficult reality of having to make structural cuts to its budget. It's a complex process. Please educate yourselves and give your feedback. City Manager Jim Keene is offering several ways to do just this:

**1) Attend the Public Outreach Meetings:**

- Saturday, May 15, 9:30-11 AM at Lucie Stern
- Wednesday, May 19, 6-7:30 PM in Barron Park (check city website for location)
- Saturday, May 22, 10-11:30 AM (check city website for location)

*City web site link for hearings:*

<http://www.cityofpaloalto.org/civica/filebank/blobload.asp?BlobID=19800>

2) **Email your comments** to [budget4pa@cityofpaloalto.org](mailto:budget4pa@cityofpaloalto.org).

3) **Attend other hearings** (see link above).

4) **Assemble a group of at least 20 people and contact Cathy Brewer** at [cathy.brewer@cityofpaloalto.org](mailto:cathy.brewer@cityofpaloalto.org) to arrange a special meeting on May 19, 6-7:30 PM OR May 22, 10-11:30 AM.

See the City's website ([http://www.cityofpaloalto.org/depts/mgr/community\\_budget\\_forum.asp](http://www.cityofpaloalto.org/depts/mgr/community_budget_forum.asp)) for more details and to read various documents available online.

If you have questions or comments please email me at [Catherine@canopy.org](mailto:Catherine@canopy.org). Many thanks for playing your part in growing healthy trees and healthy communities.