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Los Angeles Urban Forest Equity Neighborhood Strategy: Central Alameda

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Los Angeles Urban Forest Equity Neighborhood Strategy: Central Alameda

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Prepared by the Los Angeles Urban Forest Equity Collective

Central Alameda community engagement led by:
South LA Tree Coalition & North East Trees



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Land Acknowledgement

The Urban Forest Equity Collective (UFEC) acknowledges our presence in the ancestral territory of Tovaangar. This is unceded land. Their homes and livelihoods were destroyed. The Gabrieleño, Tongva, Kizh, and Fernandeano Tataviam peoples and nations are the traditional land caretakers, and we pay our respects to their Ancestors, Elders, and Relatives past, present, and emerging. Acknowledgement is a simple, powerful way of showing respect and a step toward correcting the stories and practices that erase Indigenous people's history and culture and toward inviting and honoring the truth.

Project Team

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01 Introduction

The Project

This report serves as one of five individual documents developed over the course of Phase II of the Urban Forest Equity Collective. This document provides an overview of the Central Alameda pilot neighborhood assessment, engagement, and tree planting implementation process. It is intended to provide a transparent view into the decisions, points of analysis, and key themes derived over the course of this phase.

Los Angeles Urban Forest Equity Collective (UFEC)

The Urban Forest Equity Collective is a consortium of forestry experts, Los Angeles (LA) City staff, community-based organizations, researchers, and consultants. The UFEC project aims to create a holistic analysis and strategy to advance urban forest equity in LA's lowest-canopied neighborhoods and address decades of systemic disinvestment that have resulted in poor public health outcomes, limited access to green spaces, and a host of related consequences ranging from heat exposure and poor air quality, to food insecurity and reduced ecosystem services. This work is funded by Accelerate Resilience Los Angeles (ARLA) and the US Forest Service (USFS) through the Los Angeles Center for Urban Natural Resources Sustainability.

UFEC Vision Statement

Los Angeles communities and leaders recognize the systemic causes and impacts of urban forest inequity and work together to dismantle the physical, political, and social barriers that perpetuate it. Los Angeles is actively growing, protecting, and prioritizing an accessible, inclusive, and adequately funded urban forest for all Angelenos. By advancing urban forest equity, Los Angeles will build climate resilience and enduring protection for our frontline communities.

02 Pilot Neighborhood Selection

Decision-Making Framework

CAPA Strategies led the development of an urban forest equity decision-making framework to define and compare urban forest equity considerations across neighborhoods in Los Angeles. The framework includes three quantitative assessment steps at the census tract scale, followed by a qualitative feasibility assessment at the neighborhood council scale, which guided the selection of two pilot neighborhoods, including Central Alameda and Sylmar.

The four assessment steps in the framework are outlined in Table 1. The first step considers physical and economic need by assessing canopy coverage, impervious surface coverage and median household income relative to the city-wide averages (20%, 60%, and \$67,418 respectively as of 2019). Census tracts that met the required thresholds to move beyond Step 1 in the decision-making framework demonstrated lower than average canopy, higher than average impervious cover, and lower than average median household income.

The second step establishes need by establishing environmental exposure pathways. For environmental exposure, the scope was limited to those hazards which could be directly mitigated by the presence of trees; namely, heat and air pollution.^{1,2,3} Census tracts selected in the second step displayed exposure within the upper 50th percentile (when compared against other tracts still under consideration) for heat and PM 2.5 or Diesel PM. 4 In other words, only tracts experiencing relatively high exposure to both heat and air pollution passed through this step.

The third step assesses socio-demographic conditions. The framework was not intended to identify vulnerable populations. Rather, the framework was designed to identify locations where tree canopy is lacking, and where historic and present-day disinvestment has led to systemic lack of economic resources, and in some cases, institutional political representation for residents, that would advance urban tree canopy cover. The chosen socio-demographic indicators are associated in case study literature with difficulty in accessing forestry-related resources (for more information on UFEC's methods and selection criteria, please read our report, 'LA Urban Forest Equity: Assessment, Tools, and Recommendations'). To meet the required thresholds for Step 3 and remain under consideration as a potential pilot community, census tracts were required to score within the upper 50th percentile (when compared against other tracts still under consideration) for at least four of the eight following socio-demographic indicators:⁵

- Percent of the population below the poverty line
- Percent of the adult population with less than a high school diploma
- Percent of the population that is non-white and/or Hispanic
- Percent of the population that speaks a language other than English at home
- Percent of the population that rents their home
- Percent of the population that has no home internet access
- Population density
- Residence in an area that was formerly redlined with a grade of C or D (this indicator is exempt from the upper-50th-percentile threshold; any tract that was formerly redlined with a grade of C or D is considered passing in this category)

The final step considers qualitative factors impacting feasibility and community readiness with the goal of narrowing in on the extent to which projects in a specific area are likely to succeed. There is no specific numerical threshold for the final step. Instead, the following areas are considered: (1) Level of nonprofit or partner involvement, (2) Presence of suitable sites for intervention, (3) Community interest in being engaged, (4) Extent to which an area is utilized by residents.

¹ Nowak, D. J., Hirabayashi, S., Bodine, A., & Hoehn, R. (2013). Modeled PM2.5 removal by trees in ten U.S. cities and associated health effects. *Environmental Pollution*, 178, 395–402.

² Rahman, M. A., Stratopoulos, L. M. F., Moser-Reischl, A., Zölch, T., Häberle, K.-H., Rötzer, T., ... Pauleit, S. (2020). Traits of trees for cooling urban heat islands: A meta-analysis. *Building and Environment*, 170, 106606.

³ Wang, H., Maher, B. A., Ahmed, I. A., & Davison, B. (2019). Efficient Removal of Ultrafine Particles from Diesel Exhaust by Selected Tree Species: Implications for Roadside Planting for Improving the Quality of Urban Air. *Environmental Science & Technology*, 53(12), 6906–6916.

⁴ PM refers to particulate matter, a type of pollution. PM 2.5 is a fine particle type, with particles measuring 2.5 microns or less in diameter. This type is particularly harmful as it can get deep into the lungs and possibly the bloodstream. Diesel PM comes from the exhaust of trucks, trains, ships, and diesel-powered equipment and is common in urban environments near major roadways and ports.

⁵ For all socio-demographic indicators (with the exception of formerly redlined areas) American Community Survey (ACS) 2019 data was used. This was the most recent year for which all needed datasets, including physical environment and exposure data, were available.

Table 1. The four steps of the decision-making framework

	Qualification	Yes	No
Step 1	Does the tract meet Physical and Economic need conditions? <i>[Does the tract have <=20% canopy AND >=60% impervious surface cover AND median household income <=\$67,418?]</i>	Move on to step 2.	Remove tract from further consideration.
Step 2	Does the tract experience high Environmental Exposure? <i>[Does the tract score in the upper 50th percentile (compared to other tracts under consideration in Step 2) for projected days over 90 degrees AND PM 2.5 AND/OR Diesel PM?]</i>	Move on to step 3.	Remove tract from further consideration.
Step 3	Does the tract exhibit relevant socio-demographic conditions? <i>[Does the tract score in the upper 50th percentile (compared to other tracts under consideration in Step 3) for AT LEAST four of eight indicators?]</i>	Move on to step 4.	Remove tract from further consideration.
Step 4	Does the neighborhood council representing the tract meet a qualitative threshold for feasibility?	Validate findings through community engagement or partner/professional consultation.	Consider if feasibility could be improved to prepare tracts for future projects.

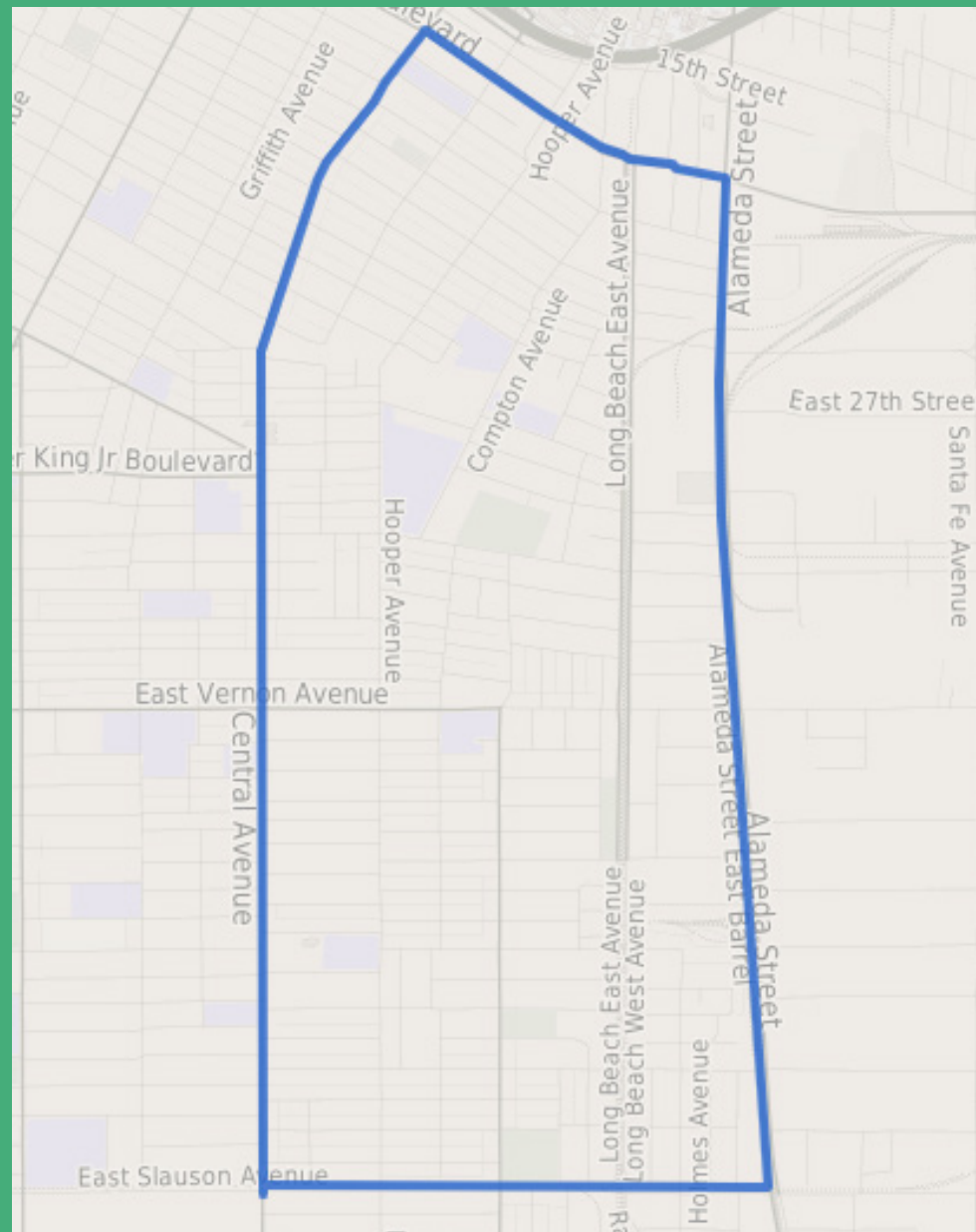


Figure 1. Map of Central Alameda
Source: Los Angeles City Planning Department 2023

Los Angeles' 1,722 census tracts were evaluated using steps 1-3 of the framework. One hundred fifty-five (155) census tracts met the criteria, which translated into 30 neighborhoods. The UFEC community engagement team assessed those 30 neighborhoods using step 4, which involved consultation with community engagement partners TreePeople and North East Trees. The team ultimately selected Sylmar and Central Alameda as the two pilot neighborhoods.

Central Alameda Context & Background

For the purposes of this project, the neighborhood of Central Alameda is bound by Washington Boulevard to the north, Alameda Street to the east, Slauson Avenue to the south, and Central Avenue on the west (Figure 1). This neighborhood falls within City of Los Angeles boundaries, and borders the industrial and highly polluted City of Vernon on its eastern side. Measuring 2.18 square miles, Central Alameda has a population of 43,638⁶ and is represented by LA City Council District 9 and the Central Alameda Neighborhood Council.

The urban forest equity decision-making framework process resulted in 21 high-priority census tracts in Central Alameda (Figure 2). Table 2 contains the average of those census tracts for each indicator noted. According to CalEnviroScreen 4.0 (CES), Central Alameda has an average CES score of 96 and an average pollution burden of 84.1, demonstrating this community's need for environmental improvements. Demographics of this area are approximately 91% Hispanic or Latino; 7.6% Black or African American; 0.4% White; 0.5% Asian; 0.2% American Indian or Alaska Native; and 0.3% Other/Multiple. Central Alameda is classified as a Disadvantaged Community (DAC), with the median household income at or below 80% of the statewide median income. DACs refers to the communities that suffer disproportionately from a combination of economic, health, and environmental burdens. Census tract 6037229000 is a prime example of a census tract that was both served by this project and will be a target for future implementation. This census tract has a poverty percentile of 99, meaning the percent of people living in poverty is higher than 99% of all of the census tracts in California. The median household income is stark at \$48,845 (far below LA County's 2023 median household income of \$98,200), and this community severely lacks access to open space with only 0.79 acres of open space per 1,000 residents. This community, which has 18,760 people per square mile, is among the highest densities for the City of Los Angeles and the United States. The CES 4.0 total percentile score for this census tract, which includes other burdens such as poverty, high unemployment, air and water pollution, and high incidences of asthma and heart disease, is in the 99th percentile, meaning that this community is among the most vulnerable throughout the state of California.

⁶ City of Los Angeles Department of City Planning 2019 <https://planning.lacity.org/>

Table 2. Central Alameda high-priority census tract indicators

Factor	Indicator	Central Alameda (Avg. of 21 high-priority tracts)
Physical & Economic Factors	Urban Tree Canopy Cover	13%
	Impervious Surface	73%
	Median Household Income	\$40,554
Environmental Exposure Factors	Days Projected Over 90F	48 days / year
	Number of Excess Emergency Room Visits (per day, per zip code)	24
	Number of Emergency Room Visits Due to Extreme Heat	11,184
	Ozone	0.067 ppm
	PM 2.5	~12 µg/m ³
	Diesel PM	0.19 Tons/year
Socio-Demographic Factors	Poverty %	30%
	Non-English Speaking %	89%
	Population Density	0.005- 0.011 people/square meter
	No Internet Access %	27%
	High School or Equivalent	81%
	Redlining HOLC Grade	D - "Hazardous"
	Renter Population	72% renters
	Non-White Population	99.6%
Land Use Breakdown by Neighborhood Council	Multi-Family	47%
	Single Family	0%
	Open Space	3%
	Commercial	8%
	Industrial	11%
	Public Facilities	6%
Tree Growth Factors & Site Conditions	Sunset Climate Zone	Zone 10a: 30F to 35F
	Soil Condition / Type	
	Average Precipitation	15 inches (average for 1877 - 2021)

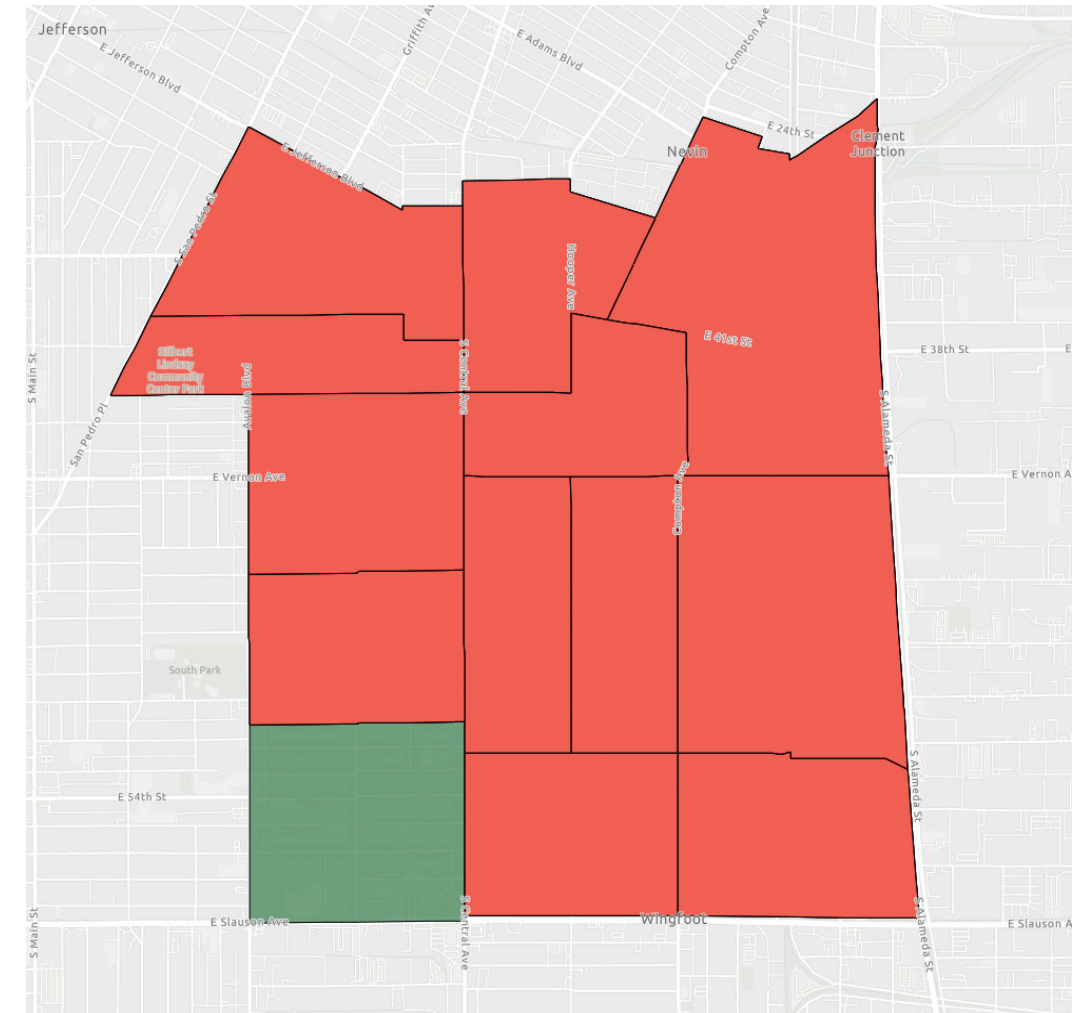


Figure 2. Central Alameda Census Tracts identified by the Urban Forest Equity Decision-Making Framework
Source: Los Angeles Urban Forestry Equity Prioritization Map

03 Central Alameda Site Conditions & Study Area

In order to ground truth and begin to explore the biggest physical challenges in Central Alameda’s landscape to advance urban forest equity, in the fall of 2022, the UFEC community engagement team walked the streets of Central Alameda to assess and document site conditions in the neighborhood. The team identified several challenges explored in more detail below.

Alleys – Many parts of the local neighborhood in Central Alameda include alleys (Figure 3). These spaces, located behind and beside both residential and commercial/industrial land uses, are marked by deteriorated paved surfaces and overhead utility lines, and serve as paths of connection between streets with little to no consistently available space for tree plantings.

Overhead Power Lines – Overhead power lines and above-ground utilities and poles present an obvious challenge to tree planting in Central Alameda as these lines exist across residential neighborhoods and commercial/industrial areas of the community (Figure 4). These features prove challenging in accommodating any species other than small-stature trees, as overhead power lines can present a conflict as a tree grows. Medium and large trees offer greater benefits than smaller trees, including shade, but overhead power lines present a significant challenge. In many cases, City of Los Angeles Street Tree Spacing Guidelines preclude medium or large trees from being planted where overhead power lines are present.

Infrastructure Relics and Social Deterrents – Many community members reported that old, inactive, and absent infrastructure elements along transit corridors pose some of the greatest challenges to everyday use of streets, feelings of safety and comfort, and overall functionality for pedestrians and cyclists (Figure 5). Many portions of Central Alameda are inhospitable due to non-operational rail tracks, lengthy sidewalk segments without natural features or installed amenities like trash cans and benches, and close proximity to heavy traffic lacking features/ infrastructure elements to buffer passersby from the limited distance and noise of streets.



Figure 3. Alley in Central Alameda



Figure 4. Overhead power lines



Figure 5. Inactive train tracks in Central Alameda

04 Community Engagement Objectives & Strategy

Community Engagement Objectives

⁷In an earlier project phase, UFEC introduced a 3-tiered system to assess different levels of investment and effort required for tree planting. Tier 1 focuses on planting opportunities in existing spaces, such as tree wells, parkways, and private backyards, requiring minimal intervention. Tier 2 involves minor modifications to the public right of way, like widening tree wells or addressing obstructions. Tier 3 encompasses more significant changes or reallocation of public roadway space for planting, including planted curb extensions and roundabouts. For more information, see the Los Angeles Urban Forest Equity Streets Guidebook (Appendix).

The community engagement strategy cultivated and implemented in Central Alameda grew out of a months-long process in which the UFEC community engagement team explored goals and potential actions. Central to this process was the development of core objectives.

Core UFEC Community Engagement Objectives

The following core objectives were developed by UFEC and underpinned all community engagement activities:

1. Serve as a source of support for community members in ongoing and future urban greening work, including work with newly planted and existing mature trees
2. Uplift a culture of care and stewardship for newly planted and existing mature trees in our communities
3. Listen to and identify the primary issues of concern in each pilot community via surveys and community workshops
4. Understand if and how trees fit into the community's vision for their neighborhood
5. Learn what attitudes, values, and knowledge residents have toward or about trees
6. Raise awareness of how urban forest equity issues impact the neighborhood and how UFEC's Tiered Planting Framework⁷ can be a tool to address those issues
7. Co-design and re-envision select neighborhood areas within two pilot neighborhoods, driven by community members with lived experience and expertise
8. Serve as a bridge and translator, communicating community needs to city decision-makers

Community Engagement Approach

Community engagement for the project consisted of several activities. Overall, activities were segmented into community outreach or engagement. Community outreach for Central Alameda involved communication with local residents and stakeholders, tabling/booths at local community events, and a project survey. Engagement activities involved the development of an interactive community workshop.

During the first portion of engagement planning, the UFEC community engagement team worked closely with urban forestry nonprofit organization North East Trees (NET) to prepare targeted outreach strategies in the community. This period of early outreach planning spanned from March to June of 2023.

During this time, NET staff members participated in launching key outreach activities including: tabling at high-traffic community events and community hubs, disseminating visually engaging bilingual flyers, interacting with community leaders, and implementing a community survey (with a target goal of obtaining at least 100 completed responses). NET is uniquely positioned to succeed with this type of outreach, due to their active involvement in urban forestry within the Central Alameda community — including planting nearly 1,000 trees and conducting local workforce development with youth and young adults — and an over 30-year track record of meaningful community outreach that results in a healthy urban forest. NET has pursued this community-driven engagement approach, centered around modern arboriculture, plant science, social science, habitat restoration, and a hands-on approach. The process forms a core part of how NET conducts business and is a model that has been recognized and adopted by other organizations in Southern California.

Community Survey

The community survey served as an instrumental initial outreach strategy for the UFEC team. The survey was developed by UFEC and informed by resources relevant to the setting and topic (Appendix). The survey was designed to understand: (1) what neighborhood-specific attitudes and values impact the planting and stewardship of trees, (2) how residents prioritize values and issues in their neighborhoods around which trees may provide a solution, and (3) attitudes/perceptions related to the reallocation of neighborhood space (such as reduced parking) that may be required for Tier 3 interventions. After pilot testing and revisions for content and length, the final survey consisted of six questions and took an average of five minutes to complete. Surveys were made available in both English and Spanish. In exchange for completion of the survey, community members were offered a \$5 gift card as compensation.

To implement the survey, UFEC partnered with NET to actively distribute the survey in a variety of venues and at various community events. In total, 148 hard copy surveys were collected from March to August of 2023 in the Central Alameda neighborhood, which exceeded the goal of collecting 100 completed surveys. These surveys were collected at a range of highly trafficked community spaces, including two public events. NET conducted three distinct outreach activities to garner participation in the survey.



Tier 1 - Available

No site modification is needed. Tree canopy goals can be achieved by planting vacant existing vacant locations.



Tier 2 - Moderate

Minimal site modifications needed. Tree canopy goals can be achieved with additional financial resources and possible site modifications within current City and County standards.



Tier 3 - Hard

Drastic site modifications needed. Significant tree canopy increase cannot be achieved with existing infrastructure and policy modifications are needed to reach canopy equity and public health targets.

These activities included: door-to-door outreach where the organization's street tree planting and maintenance crew visited residences and inquired about interest in participating in the survey; engagement with the Pueblo del Rio housing community through presentation/participation at their Resident Advisory Committee (RAC) meeting; and, a public health resource fair at the Augustus F. Hawkins Nature Park where NET also hosted a free tree giveaway. Additionally, the survey was distributed electronically via an email blast to targeted constituents.

Community Survey Results

Survey responses from community members in Central Alameda indicate that 92% of respondents reported being 18 years old or older. Responses from those below 18 were excluded from the analyses. Of surveys completed by individuals age 18 and older, approximately 82% of respondents live in the neighborhood, and 27% have lived there more than 15 years. Additionally, 16% work in Central Alameda, and 3% attend school in the neighborhood.

Results show trees are valued among Central Alameda community members. Over 80% of respondents agreed that trees in front of every home would be good for the neighborhood, trees will encourage people to be outside more, and trees are beautiful to look at. As seen in Figure 6, the most highly valued benefits of trees are improved air quality, neighborhood beautification, and reduced temperatures in hot weather.

As depicted in Figure 7, when asked where they would like to see more trees planted in Central Alameda, respondents showed a strong preference for parks (71%), schools (57%), and residential streets (55%). Less popular locations for new trees included private yards (32%), commercial properties (23%) and alleys (16%).

Key challenges facing the urban forest in Central Alameda include tree care and maintenance. Approximately 60% of respondents believe it is the City's responsibility to care for street trees and 33% feel the trees in their neighborhood are poorly maintained. However, the majority of respondents did not express strong concern about the risk of trees creating a mess or property damage, indicating that the perception of trees causing problems of this sort is not a significant barrier in Central Alameda.

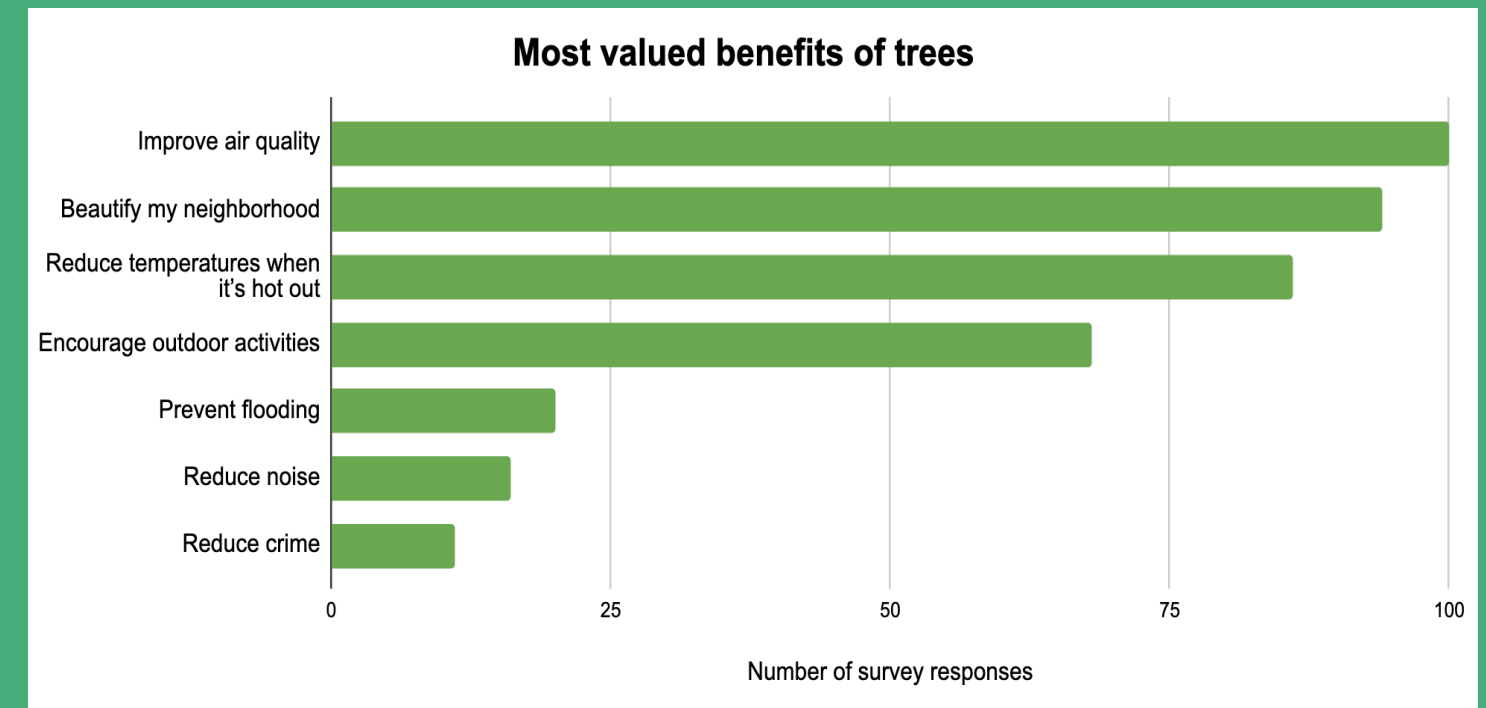


Figure 6. Most valued benefits of trees

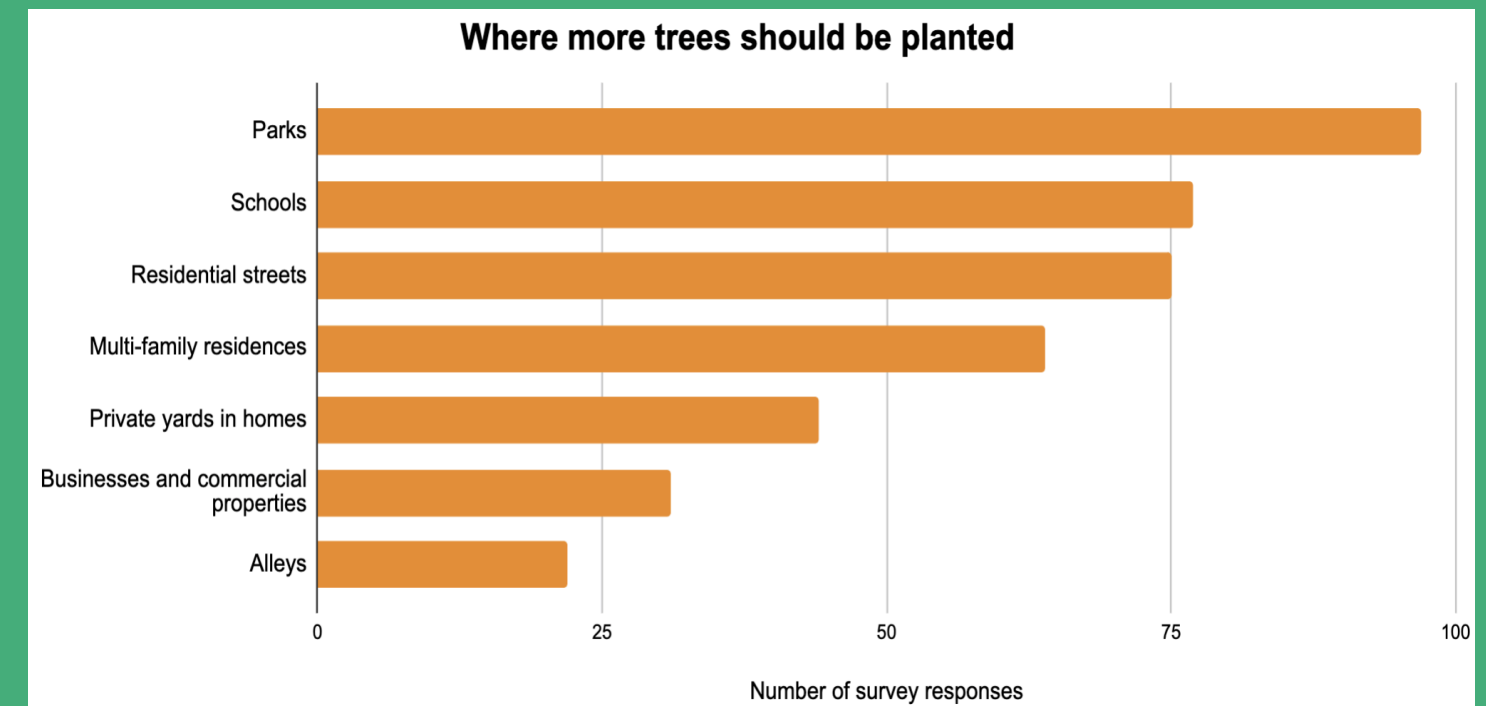


Figure 7. Desired tree planting locations

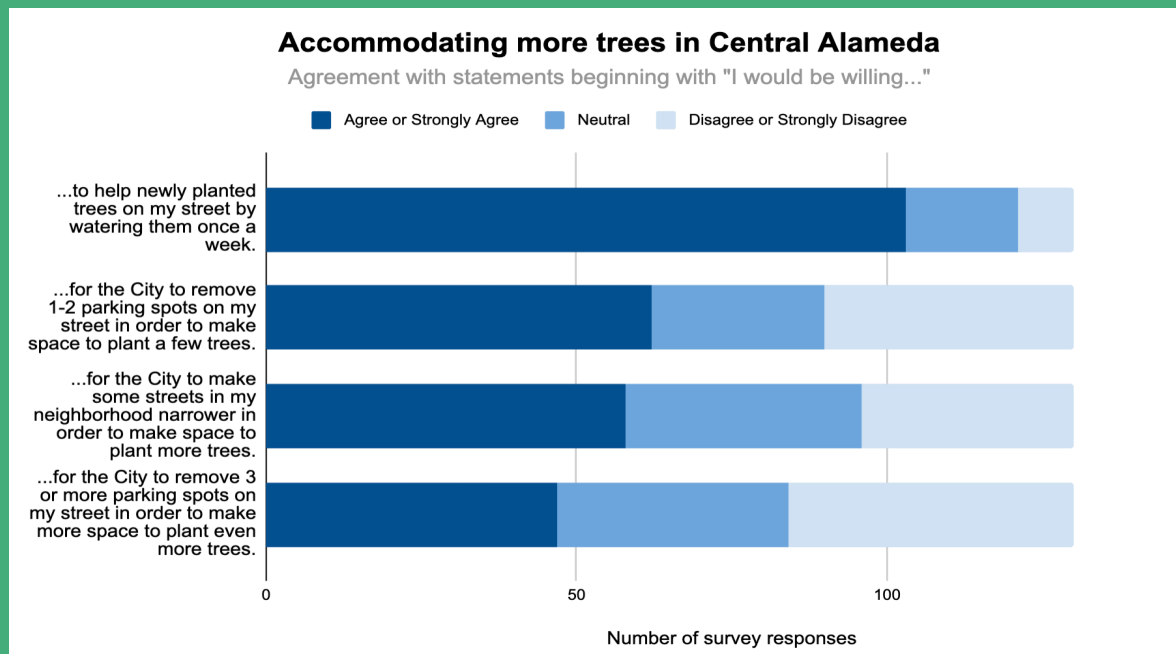


Figure 8. Willingness to accommodate more trees

Questions regarding the strategies for Central Alameda to accommodate more trees produced mixed responses. The majority of respondents (80%) want more trees in the neighborhood, and approximately 70% of respondents expressed a desire for trees in their home. Nearly half (46%) would be willing to give up one to two parking spaces on their street to make room for trees, but only one third (34%) are willing to give up three or more spaces. Less than half (43%) would be open to the City narrowing some streets to make room for more trees (Figure 8).

Survey results obtained through North East Trees' efforts provided insights used to guide planning and development for the community workshop held in Central Alameda during late summer 2023.



Figure 9. The workshop took place at the Augustus F. Hawkins Nature Park



Figure 10. Workshop participants worked on mapping activities in small groups

Workshop

Building on this initial project outreach in the community, the second portion of engagement work identified the South LA Tree Coalition as a community-based organization partner to conduct an interactive public workshop. This two and a half hour workshop occurred in September 2023 and convened residents, community leaders and stakeholders to provide insights and share experiences related to the role and presence of trees (or lack thereof) in their community. Participants were given \$50 gift cards as compensation for their time and participation. Lunch was provided, and a table of kid-friendly activities was available for participants who brought their children. Live Spanish language interpretation was made available to several attendees.

The South LA Tree Coalition held the workshop for Central Alameda residents at the Augustus F. Hawkins Nature Park, on September 16, 2023 (Figures 9 & 10). Workshop recruitment was conducted by the South LA Tree Coalition through targeted online outreach which identified community members who had participated in the survey, local community leaders, and other organizations and stakeholders. Workshop participation required pre-registration through an online form due to the limited size of the venue, which allowed for a maximum of 50 people.

The UFEC community engagement team set the following objectives for the Central Alameda workshop: support community-building among participants; introduce the Los Angeles Urban Forest Equity Collective and the tiered tree planting framework; and invite community participants to identify priority street or block segments where they would like to see more trees added to their neighborhood. The format of the workshop consisted of a welcome segment and initial introductions, an icebreaker activity for attendees, a presentation overviewing UFEC and the pilot neighborhood project, and an interactive, discussion-based activity that rotated attendees across varied topic-based stations.

In the first half of the workshop, facilitators provided context around UFEC, the South LA Tree Coalition, the benefits of urban trees, and preliminary takeaways from the community survey. Next, facilitators shared information on environmental exposures in Central Alameda including extreme heat days per year and air pollution. The UFEC tiered planting framework was later introduced and photographs were shared highlighting the local streetscape and on-the-ground site conditions in Central Alameda, including infrastructure challenges that may impact planting more trees, and specifically larger shade-providing trees, throughout the neighborhood.

In the second half of the workshop, participants were divided into small groups and rotated across four stations to provide feedback, insights, and discussion to map images and specified prompts. UFEC created a map of Central Alameda for the workshop to contextualize opportunities for canopy expansion with current site conditions and relevant city plans for streetscape improvements (Figures 11 & 12). The map included existing canopy coverage, vacant tree wells, High Injury networks (identified in the Los Angeles Vision Zero Plan), and Pedestrian, Bicyclist and Transit Enhanced Networks (identified in the LA 2035 Mobility Plan). Stickers, pushpins, and yarn were used to engage with maps and demark input visually.

The following questions were identified for each station:

Station A – What are three streets you walk regularly? What are the streets you avoid, and why? (Figure 13)

Station B – What are three places in the community where you spend the most time? (Figure 14)

Station C – What areas in your neighborhood do you think might need more trees? (Figure 15)

Station D – What are values and qualities that mean the most to you when you think about streets in your neighborhood? (Figures 16 & 17)

Community members offered an abundance of insights, wisdom, experiences, and ideas to the discussion. The workshop space was lively, upbeat, and collaborative. Community members responded to questions with expert-level guidance and knowledge in many cases and shared stories of their experiences with and relationships to trees. Many of the anecdotal cases shared revealed a strong undercurrent of proactive, self-sponsored stewardship, and initiative among community members who have long recognized the absence of trees in their neighborhood and the challenges inherent to increasing the number of trees in public and private spaces.



Figure 11. Workshop participants indicated streets they walk regularly as well as those they avoid



Figure 12. Workshop participants indicated places in the community where they spend the most time

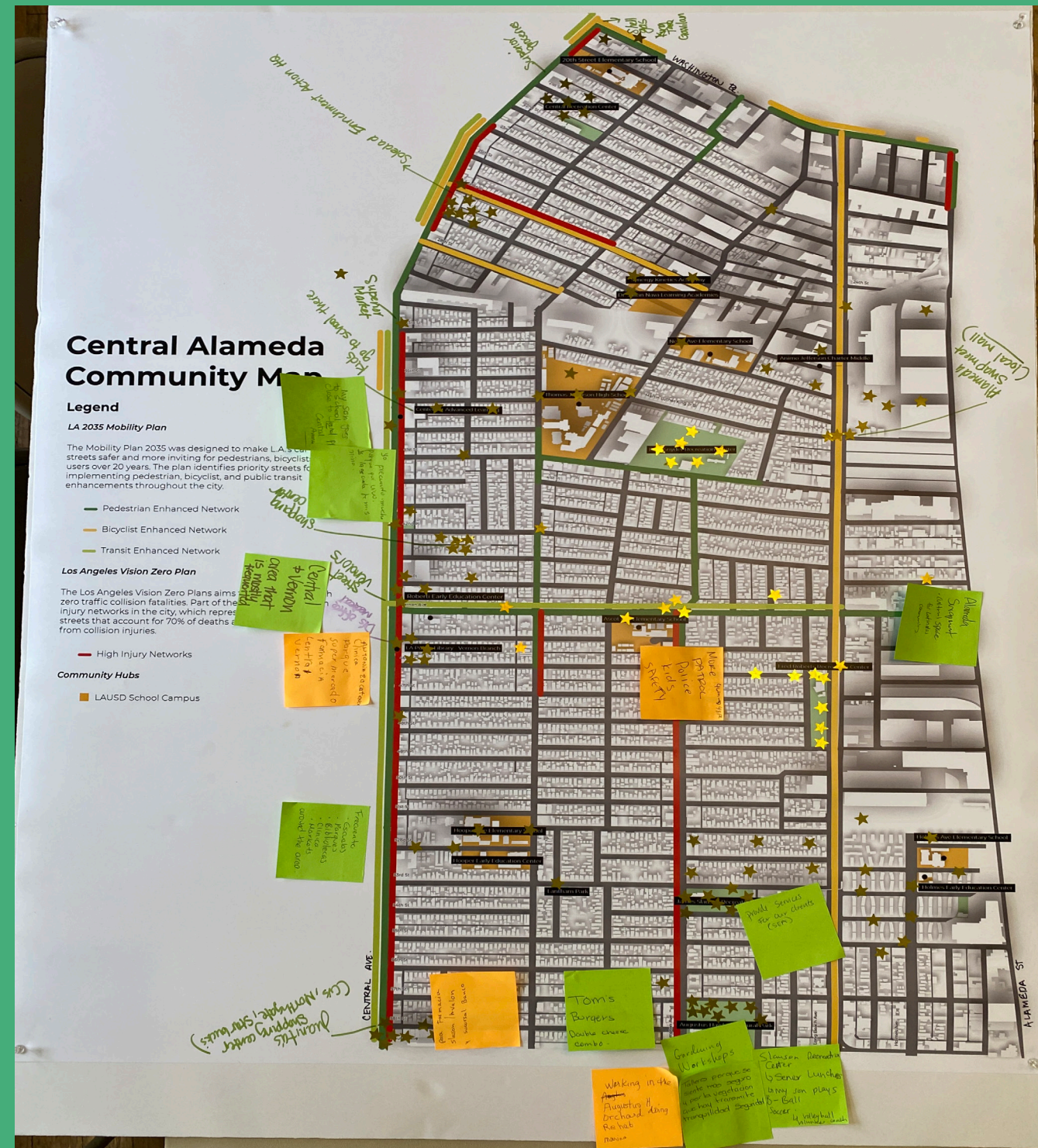
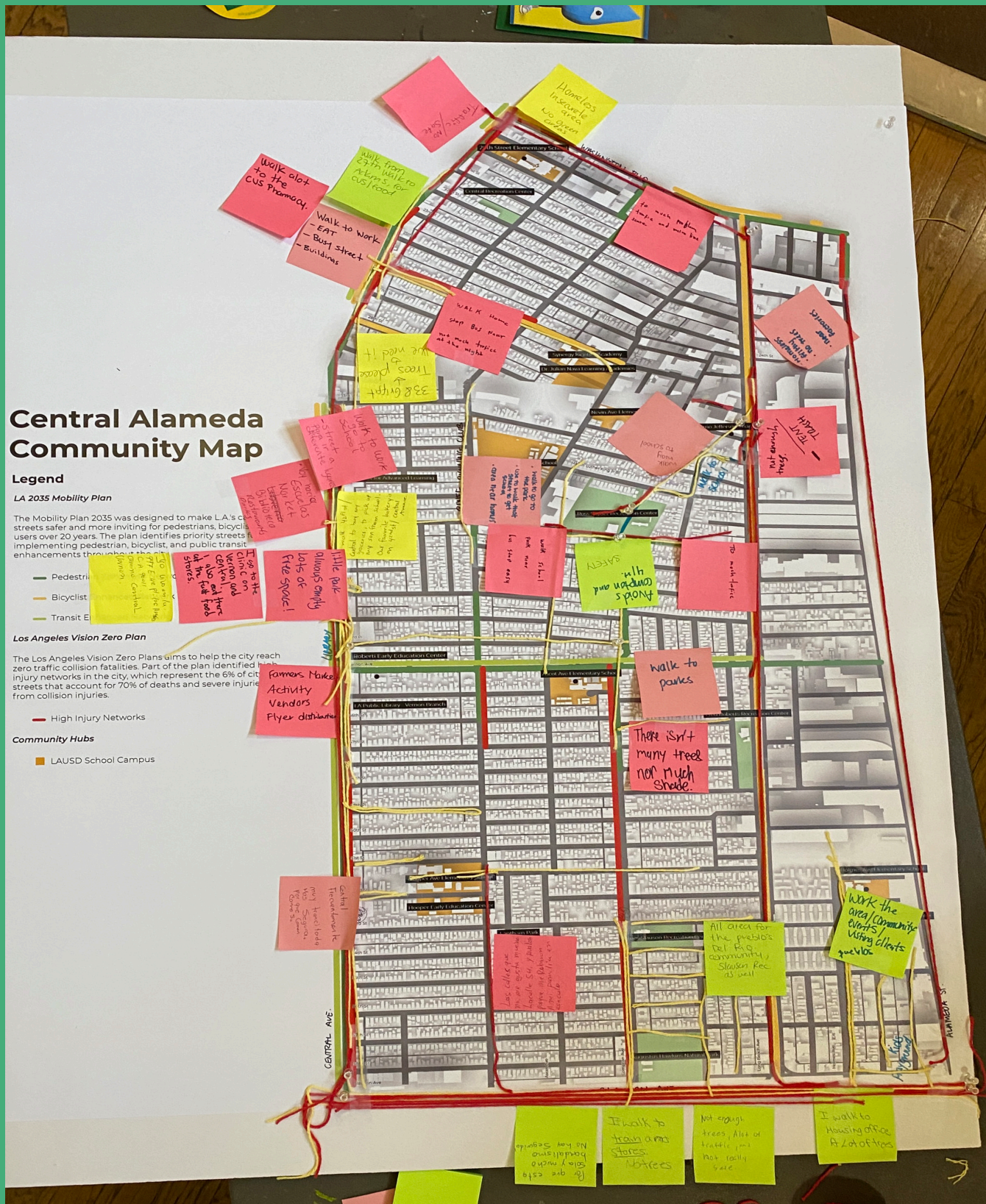


Figure 13. Station A map: participants indicated streets they walk regularly and those they avoid

Figure 14. Station B map: participants indicated places in the community where they spend the most time

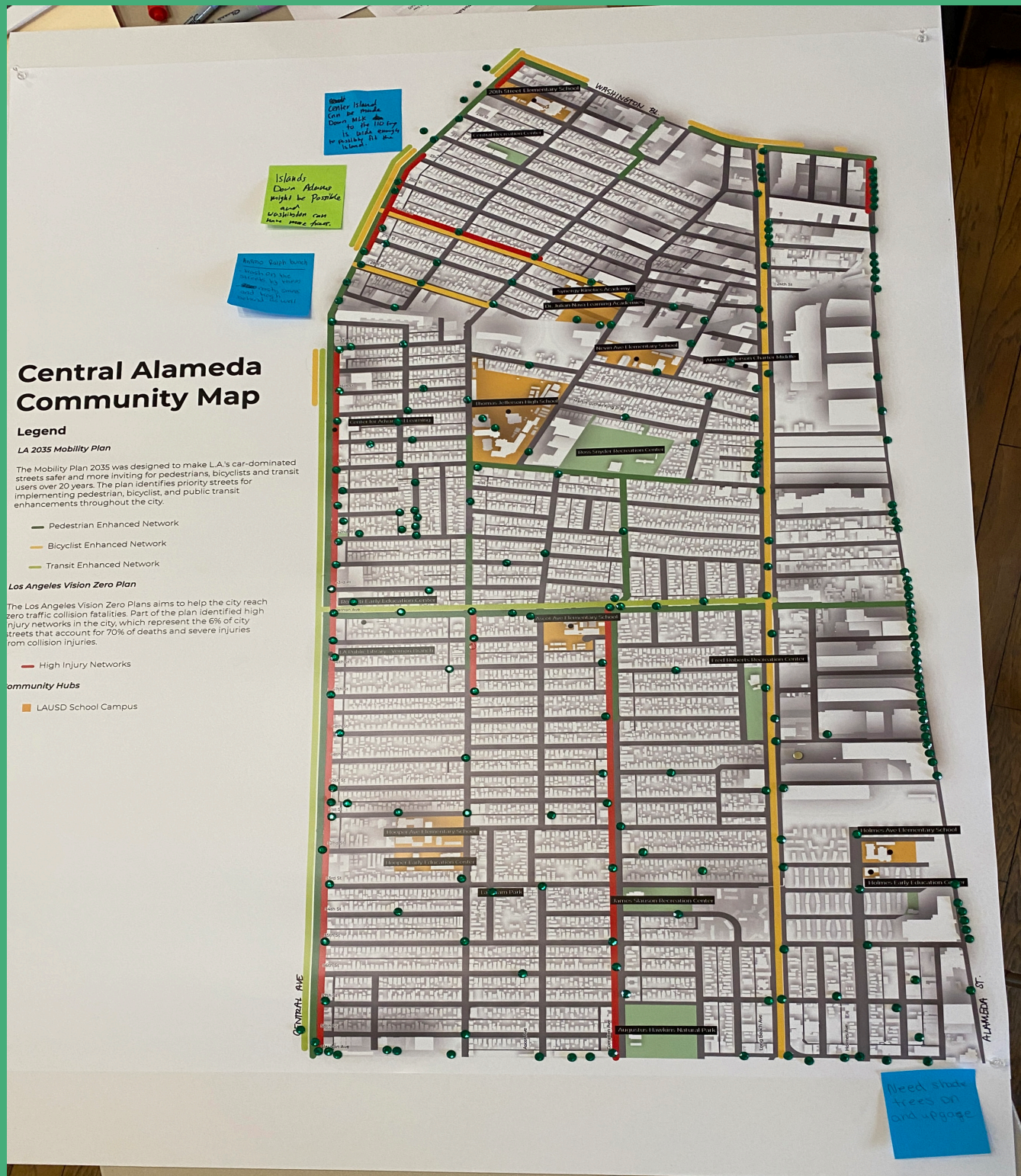


Figure 15. Station C map: participants indicated places in their community that they think might need more trees

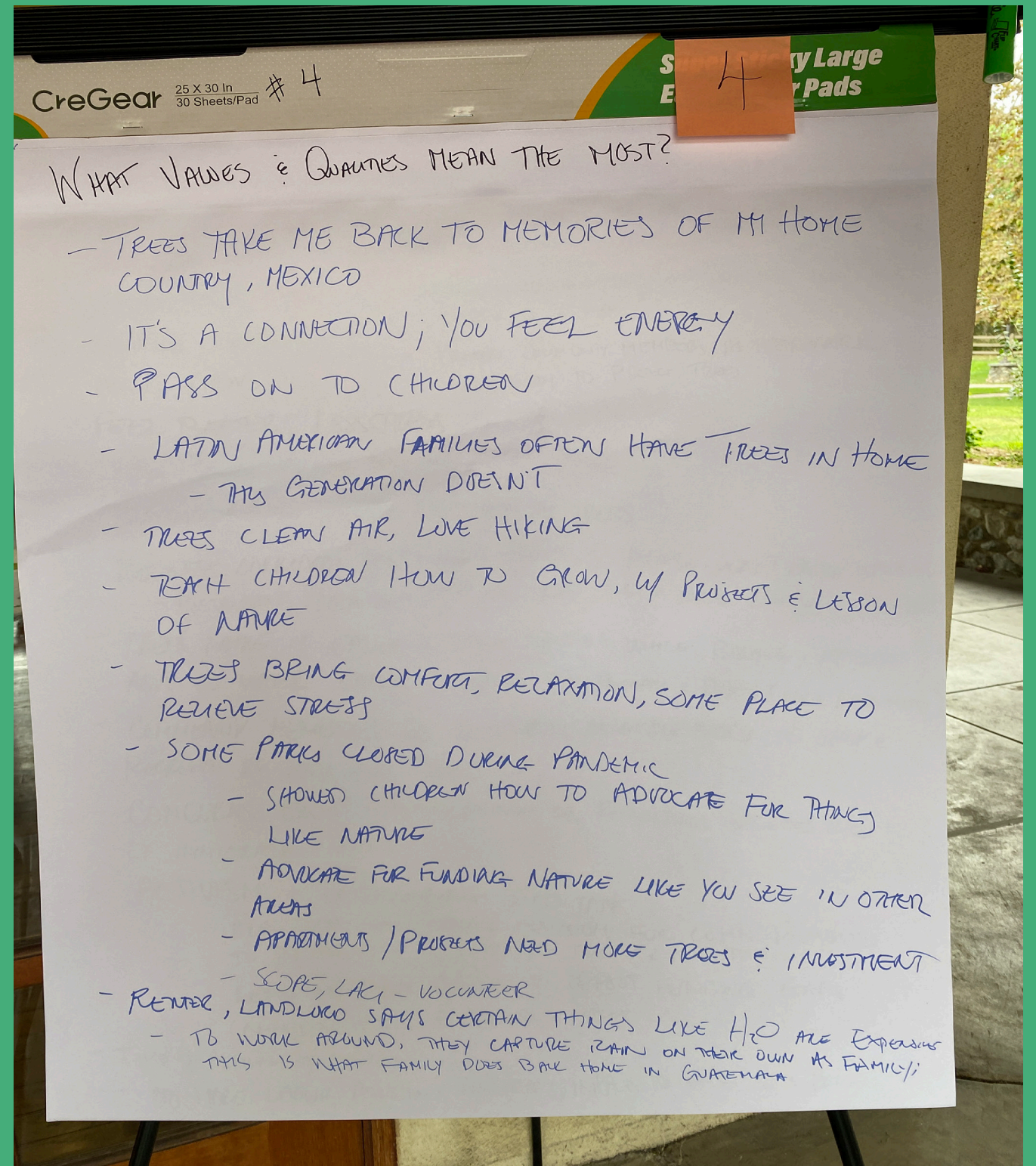


Figure 16. Participants shared values and qualities that mean the most to them when they think of the streets in their neighborhood

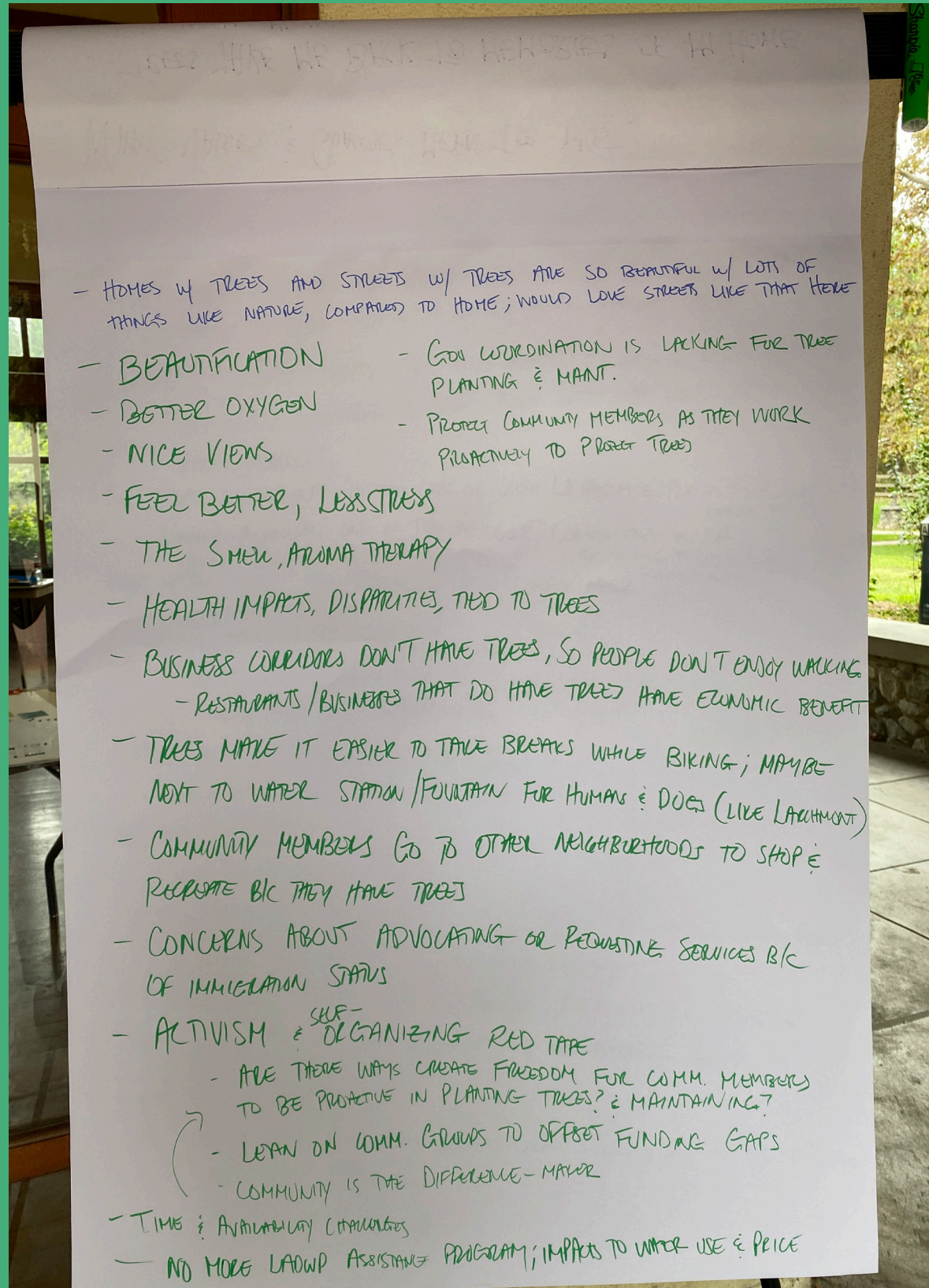


Figure 17. Participants shared values and qualities that mean the most to them when they think of the streets in their neighborhood



Figure 18. Community members provided comments on the maps using sticky notes



Figure 19. A kids' craft table provided snacks and activities for young workshop attendees

Key themes that emerged from the workshop (Figures 18 & 19) centered on values ranging from air quality and public health benefits offered by trees, to beautification and quality of life contributions that trees offer when thoughtfully placed along routes to schools, adjacent to transit stops, and in major congregation spots like restaurants, retail locations, and public housing complexes. Many participants discussed the ways in which they value spending time in communities with lush tree-lined shopping corridors and associated amenities and will travel to distant communities including Larchmont and Palos Verdes to patronize businesses and spend their leisure time, rather than spend their time and resources in their home community due to the lack of such infrastructure and amenities.

Mapping activity stations yielded important feedback about where interventions could be most impactful and supportive of community needs. In Station A, several central corridors were noted as both highly utilized and often avoided, suggesting improvements along those corridors may have high impact. The mapping at Station B revealed that community members spend the majority of their time in local parks and community spaces like schools and centers, and Station C indicated a desire for more trees across key corridors and pathways frequented by community members.

05 Community-Informed Designs

The design development process began with a review and synthesis of feedback from the community surveys, community workshop, local site conditions, and the components layered within the community outreach maps used in the workshops. The UFEC community engagement team worked closely with partnering firm Stoss Landscape Urbanism to settle on two street sections that speak to community concerns and provide the opportunity to demonstrate multiple types of urban forestry applications, including Tier 3 intervention possibilities. These selected locations were (1) Central Avenue & 42nd Place, and (2) 53rd Street & Long Beach Avenue.

Stoss Landscape Urbanism incorporated community feedback to develop site-specific designs, which they shared with the UFEC community engagement team for several rounds of review and revision. UFEC also engaged in a feedback process with the City of Los Angeles Interdepartmental Streets Working Group in June of 2023 to assess the feasibility of implementing interventions along street segments, according to land use, zoning, slated capital improvement projects, and roadway designations. In engaging with the Streets Working Group, UFEC shared current and projected canopy analysis in Central Alameda and the other pilot neighborhood of Sylmar, as well as initial community engagement findings and design concepts from Sylmar to determine the feasibility of implementing community-informed Tier 3 interventions and designs.

The working group shared feedback on framing for community engagements, feasibility and process considerations. They advised that highly trafficked pedestrian areas would generally be more likely to be prioritized for Tier 3 interventions, and a mix of land uses within a corridor would also improve likelihood of prioritization. The working group also noted that road width changes would necessitate involvement of the Department of Transportation in the process, and expressed support for framing community engagements around values, including travel speed, vehicle capacity, community safety, and greening.

Designs for Central Avenue and 42nd Place

Proposed designs for Central Avenue and 42nd Place address site specific challenges and opportunities identified by community members, the UFEC team, and the Los Angeles Streets Working Group. Challenges include overhead utility lines, heat-exposed sidewalk with minimal shade, and an unwelcoming park with low canopy cover (Figure 20). The design sought to address these challenges while also capitalizing on the opportunity presented by underutilized traffic lanes and outdoor community spaces. A bird's-eye view of the street segment (Figure 21) illustrates the sparse existing tree canopy and available existing planting near the intersection.

Diagrams related to two proposed designs are presented here: the first includes Tier 1 and 2 interventions and the second includes Tier 3. In the Tier 1 and Tier 2 design diagram, small trees are proposed for planting in existing planting spaces, existing trees are designated for protection and maintenance, and vehicular traffic lanes remain unchanged (Figures 22 & 23). The Tier 3 design diagram proposes a curb extension planted with small trees to manage stormwater, reduction of two lane vehicular traffic to one lane shared with bicycles, relocated parking spaces, a median planted with large trees, and a stormwater infiltration bulbout planted with trees near the intersection (Figures 24 & 25). The Tier 3 design also includes sidewalk enhancements including seating elements, trash bins, and bike racks along the now shaded sidewalk. Figure 26 imagines the proposed Tier 3 design with mature trees and an established native plant palette in the understory of the median and bulbouts.

Challenges and Opportunities

Central Avenue and 42nd Place



Figure 20. Central Avenue and 42nd Place, challenges and opportunities
Credit: Stoss Landscape Urbanism

Existing Condition

Central Avenue and 42nd Place



Figure 21. Central Avenue and 42nd Place, existing condition
Credit: Stoss Landscape Urbanism

Proposed Design Diagram - Tier 1+2

Central Avenue and 42nd Place



Figure 22. Central Avenue and 42nd Place, proposed design diagram, Tier 1 and Tier 2
Credit: Stoss Landscape Urbanism

Proposed Plan - Tier 1 + Tier 2

Central Avenue and 42nd Place



Figure 23. Central Avenue and 42nd Place, proposed Tier 1 and Tier 2 plan
Credit: Stoss Landscape Urbanism

Proposed Design Diagram - Tier 3

Central Avenue and 42nd Place



Figure 24. Central Avenue and 42nd Place, proposed design diagram, Tier 3
Credit: Stoss Landscape Urbanism



Figure 25. Central Avenue and 42nd Place, proposed Tier 3 plan
Credit: Stoss Landscape Urbanism

Proposed Perspectival Section - Tier 3

Central Avenue and 42nd Place

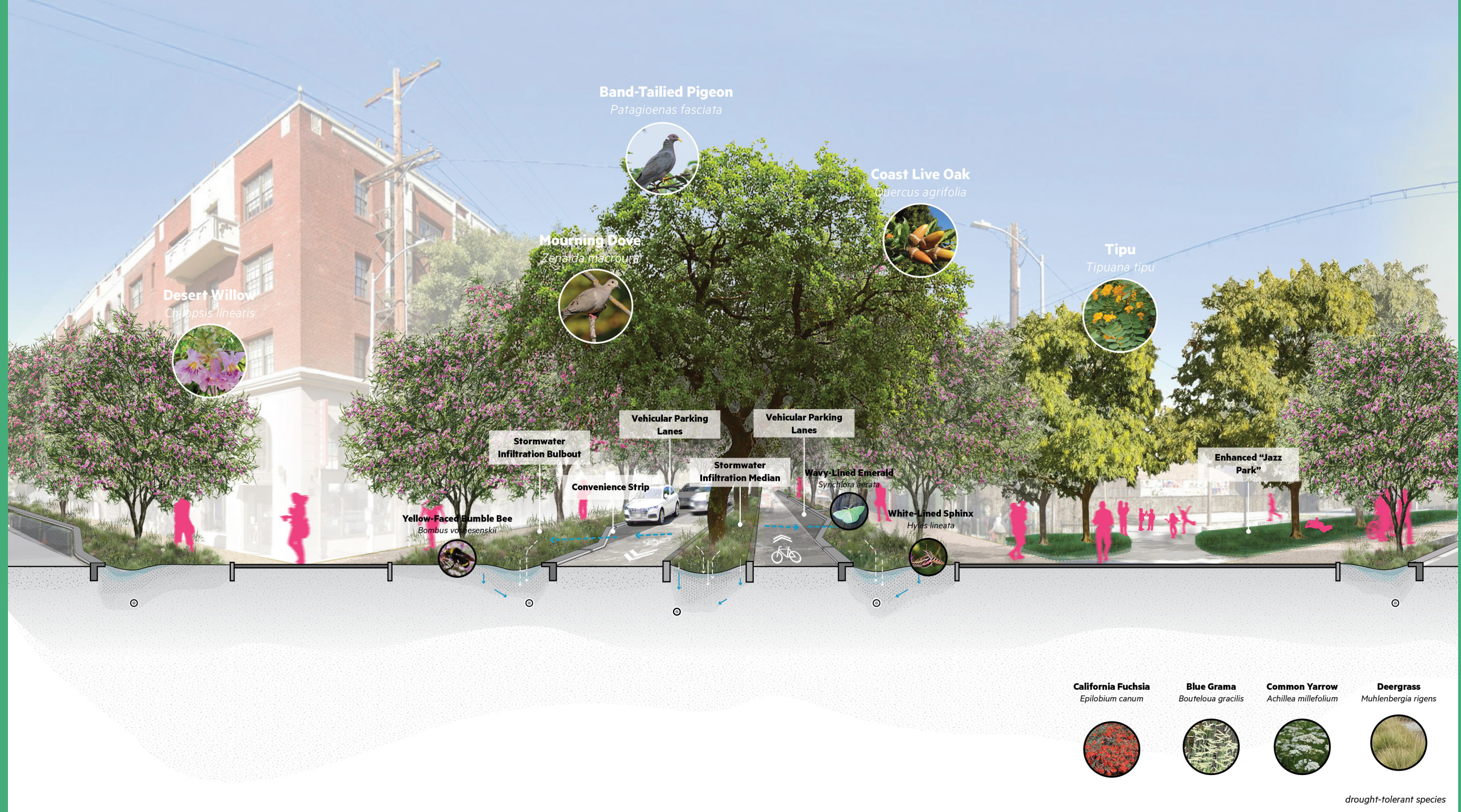


Figure 26. Central Avenue and 42nd Place, proposed design, Tier 3
Credit: Stoss Landscape Urbanism

Designs for 53rd Street and Long Beach Avenue

Proposed designs for 53rd Street and Long Beach Avenue incorporate site specific challenges and opportunities identified by community members, the UFEC team, and the Los Angeles Streets Working Group (Figure 27). Challenges include narrow existing parkways with no planted trees, heat-exposed, unshaded sidewalks, and a train track blocking the road at Long Beach Avenue. Opportunities lie in the underutilized traffic lane, the absence of overhead utility infrastructure, and a pedestrian bridge near Long Beach Avenue. A bird's-eye view of the street segment (Figure 28) illustrates the existing unplanted space and current tree canopy in the public right-of-way.

Diagrams related to two proposed designs are presented: the first includes Tier 1 and 2 interventions (Figures 29 & 30) and the second includes Tier 3 (Figures 31 & 32). In the Tier 1 and Tier 2 design diagram, small trees are proposed for planting in existing planting spaces in the parkways as well as private yards, and vehicular traffic lanes remain unchanged. The Tier 3 design diagram proposes planting large canopy trees on private yards, a planted curb extension to provide stormwater management and planting space for large canopy trees, reduction of two-way traffic to a one-way lane shared with bicycles, as well as sidewalk enhancements including bike racks, trash bins, and seating. Figure 33 imagines the proposed Tier 3 with mature trees and an established native plant palette in the understory of the planted curb extensions.

Challenges and Opportunities

53rd Street and Long Beach Avenue



Figure 27. 53rd Street and Long Beach Avenue, challenges and opportunities
Credit: Soss Landscape Urbanism

Existing Condition

53rd Street and Long Beach Avenue



Figure 28. 53rd Street and Long Beach Avenue, existing condition
Credit: Stoss Landscape Urbanism

Proposed Design Diagram - Tier 1+2

53rd Street and Long Beach Avenue

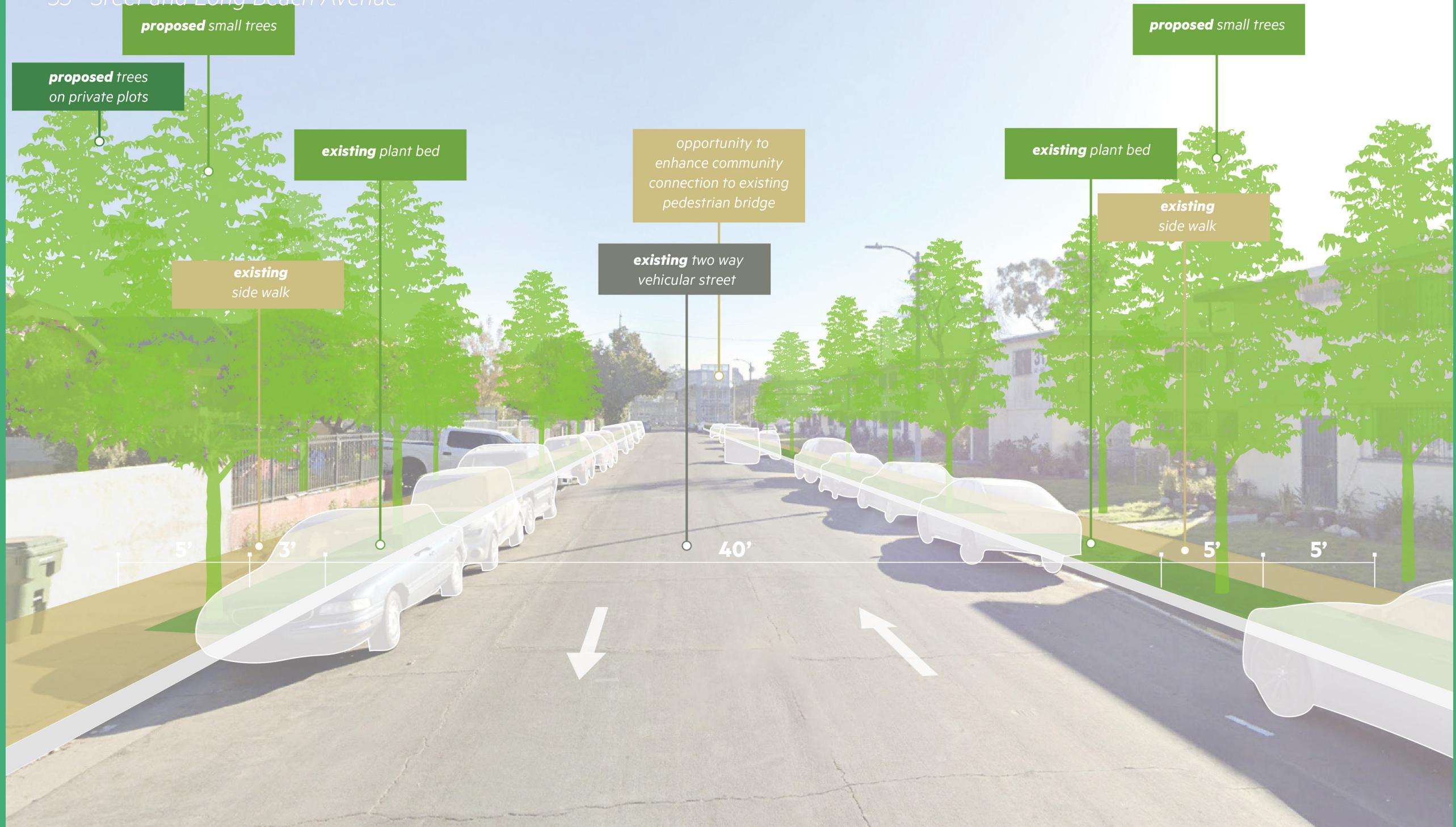


Figure 29. 53rd Street and Long Beach Avenue, proposed design diagram, Tier 1 and Tier 2
Credit: Stoss Landscape Urbanism

Proposed Plan - Tier 1 + Tier 2

53rd Street and Long Beach Avenue



Figure 30. 53rd Street and Long Beach Avenue, proposed Tier 1 and Tier 2 plan
Credit: Stoss Landscape Urbanism

Proposed Design Diagram - Tier 3

53rd Street and Long Beach Avenue

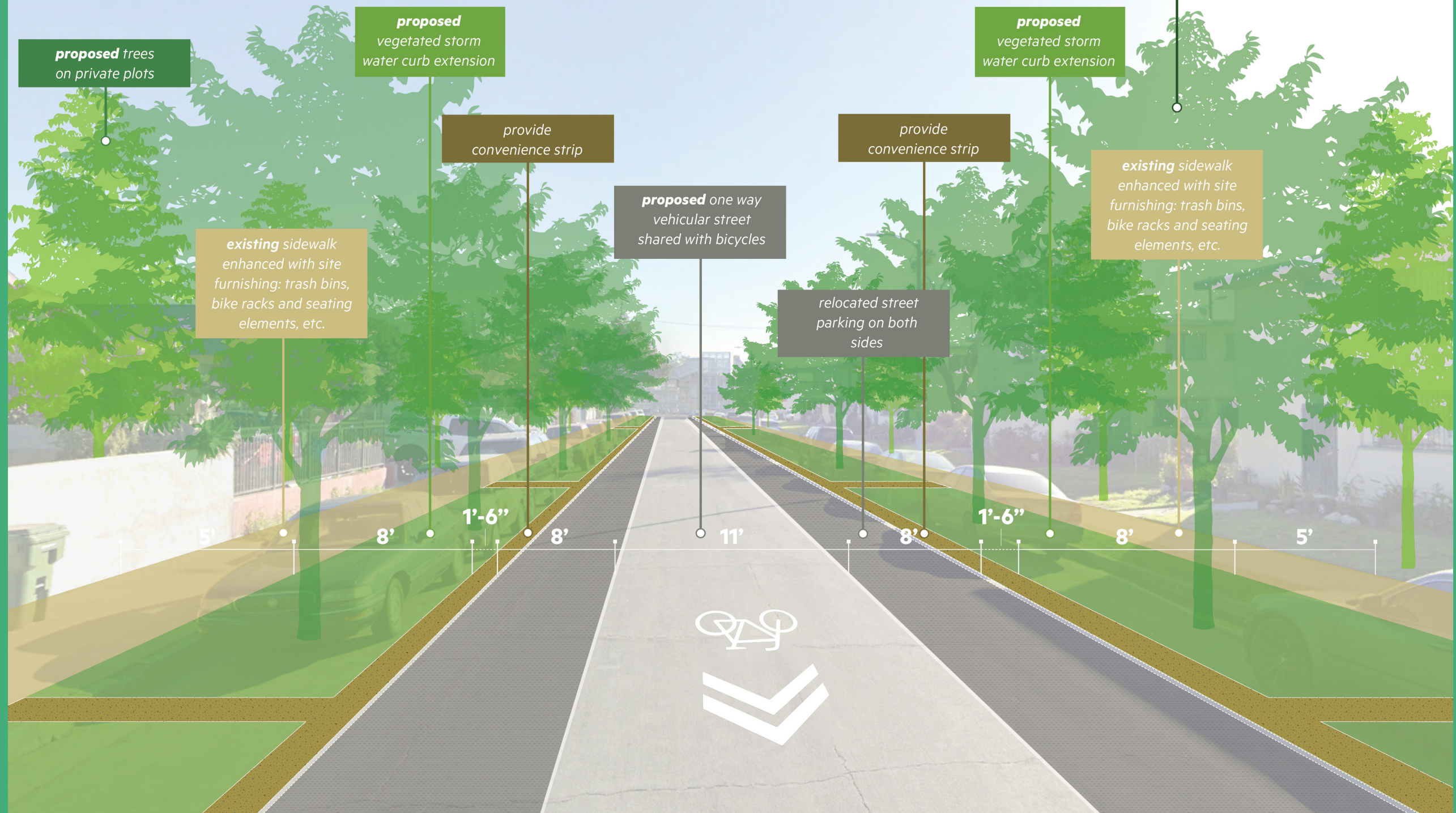


Figure 31. 53rd Street and Long Beach Avenue, proposed design diagram, Tier 3
Credit: Stoss Landscape Urbanism

Proposed Plan - Tier 3

53rd Street and Long Beach Avenue



Figure 32. 53rd Street and Long Beach Avenue, proposed Tier 3 plan
Credit: Stoss Landscape Urbanism

Proposed Perspectival Section - Tier 3

53rd Street and Long Beach Avenue

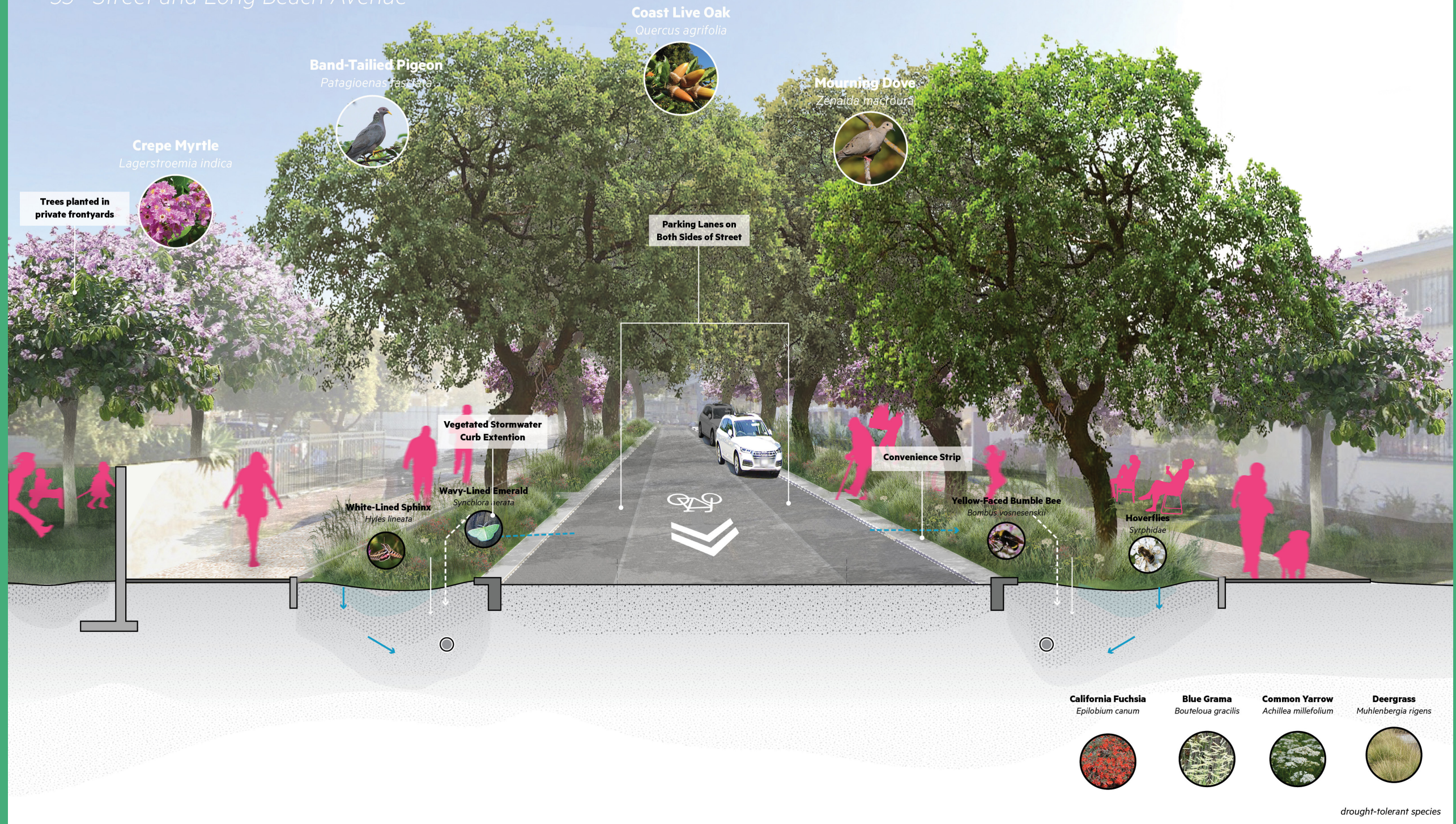


Figure 33. Foothill Boulevard and Astoria Street, proposed design, Tier 3
Credit: Stoss Landscape Urbanism

06 Looking Ahead: Next Steps for Implementation

The community engagement and design process conducted by North East Trees (NET) in Central Alameda builds on over fifteen years of working within that community, building essential trust with community members, stakeholders, and leaders through tree planting, and local workforce development. More recently, NET conducted community engagement as part of an existing grant project funded by the California Natural Resources Agency in 2020. This project includes the planting of 1,000 street trees in Central Alameda and 100 shade trees in the Pueblo del Rio public housing development, along with the construction of a community-driven park inside of the development. NET joined the UFEC project to explore new opportunities to increase tree canopy in this community, harnessing community input to accelerate the pace of greening in Central Alameda. These two projects allowed NET to engage and obtain input from the local residents, community leaders, elected officials, and relevant stakeholders such as the Housing Authority of the City of Los Angeles, Urban Forestry Division, the Los Angeles Police Department, and various nonprofits working in the community. Having established strong relationships within this community and received ample input throughout this process, NET identified various opportunities for urban forestry interventions that will help increase the tree canopy in this neighborhood. These are discussed in the following pages.

Tier 1 Implementation Opportunities

Planting Trees on Private Property – NET was recently awarded a re-grant from TreePeople (using funds from California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection, or CAL FIRE, and City Plants via the LA Department of Water and Power) to implement a residential tree planting program in Central Alameda. This project will provide NET with an immediate opportunity to directly respond to the recent community feedback that received on the need for more tree canopy cover in Central Alameda. This program will entail conducting community outreach, site assessments at approximately 150 properties, selecting appropriate species for each home, and planting at least 200 trees. This work will be done by crews that are hired from the Central Alameda community. The program would also require a robust promotion and community outreach component in order to enroll residents into the program. This model could be replicated throughout the City in low tree canopy, disinvested communities, as NET has already received interest to conduct a similar project in Northeast Los Angeles.

Planting Trees in Existing Parks – There are a limited number of City parks in the Central Alameda neighborhood. These include Augustus Hawkins Nature Park, Fred Roberts Recreation Center, and the Slauson Recreation Center. These parks could accommodate additional trees which would qualify for funding from any number of urban greening grants. Additionally, and if granted access by the parks, NET could leverage their Corporate Tree Planting Program to fund additional trees in these critical open spaces.

Planting Trees on School Campuses – Some of the schools in the Central Alameda neighborhood include Ascot Avenue Elementary School, Hooper Avenue Elementary School, and Holmes Avenue Elementary School. School greening has become a high priority at the state level, and was one of a few line items to be preserved amidst a \$30,000,000,000 state budget cut for FY 23/24. There is ample funding to plant trees on these campuses through both private and public funding sources. For example, CAL FIRE awarded over \$117 million in school greening grants in 2023 alone. NET was awarded a nearly \$2.5 million grant in this round. With a demonstrated ability to write award-winning proposals, the organization is positioned to apply for grant funding to plant more trees on school campuses in Central Alameda.

Tier 2 Implementation Opportunities

Creating New Tree Wells – While conducting surveys for new street trees in the Central Alameda neighborhood, NET also documented locations for concrete cuts for new tree wells. According to preliminary surveys utilizing City of LA standards, NET identified over 100 suitable locations for new tree wells, which would require cutting concrete. Many of these would be along the perimeter of local schools while others are in commercial areas. Furthermore, the City of Los Angeles received Inflation Reduction Act dollars to provide concrete cuts near schools, and NET has been in contact with them about leveraging their new grant to grow the urban canopy where it's needed most.

Existing Tree Well Modifications, Site Enhancements, & Dead Tree Removal – Anecdotally, one of the concerns expressed by residents in Central Alameda is the lack of urban forestry services provided by the City of Los Angeles for this neighborhood. These services include tree trimming, tree care and watering, removal of dead tree stumps in existing tree wells, and removal of other objects such as metal poles or concrete debris in existing tree wells. If the City were able to remove such obstacles from existing tree wells, we would be able to plant an estimated 100 new trees in those locations.

Tier 3 Implementation Opportunities

Green Alleys – Over the past several years there has been a growing effort to create green alleys in South Central Los Angeles. Some of this work has been done by the Trust for Public Land alongside partner organizations in neighborhoods adjacent to Central Alameda. Since park space is limited, there is an opportunity to develop alleys in order to provide additional green space in this community. These alleys could also be opportunities for pedestrian and bicycle use as well as stormwater capture and increased tree canopy with trees being planted in adjacent backyard spaces. This could tie in with the residential tree program, as for instance, homes where trees could be planted that would shade an alley, could be a priority consideration.

Land Acquisition and Parks – Since park space is so limited in this densely populated area, there should be an effort to acquire and develop land in order to create new parks. Just as the old rail line along Slauson is being converted into a linear park, other opportunities to repurpose former industrial sites and brownfields should be explored. One example of this is the multiple acre, vacant site on 51st St. between Long Beach Avenue and Alameda Street. Other, smaller pocket parks could also be developed in vacant lots throughout the community. This is how and why the Augustus Hawkins Nature Park was created. Once a City of Los Angeles storage yard, now this park is an oasis of nature in a highly urbanized area. Large acquisitions, especially with former rail lines, may require large levels of local, state, and federal funding, as well as political support. With the political momentum of the federal Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, this community could garner funding for these types of projects

Community-Driven Momentum for Nature-Based Solutions

There are a number of opportunities for other infrastructure improvements that would accommodate additional trees in this community. Whether it is reconfiguring 53rd Street at Long Beach Avenue, improving the space at Central Avenue and 42nd Place, or adding a median down the center of Holmes Avenue between 55th Street and Slauson Avenue, community input highlights multiple spaces that with sufficient resources could be transformed through green interventions. These interventions could include stormwater capture, native trees and plant landscapes, bicycle lanes and pedestrian connections. Funding for these projects could also come from federal and state levels.

Much of the work that has been completed for currently-funded greening project in Central Alameda was carried out by residents of the Central Alameda neighborhood and the Pueblo del Rio housing development. The design concepts for the park project at Pueblo del Rio were conceived with participation from the community and in partnership with The Urban Studio. This landscape architecture firm was hired by NET in part because their staff who oversaw the work included a former resident of Pueblo del Rio, who still has family living there. One thousand new shade trees have been planted and cared for by NET crews hired directly from the community. The outreach and engagement for the project was also conducted by residents from Central Alameda. Local workforce and economic development with youth and young adults is a cornerstone of the NET model and is critical to the success of community-driven urban forestry programs, as it builds the trust needed to ensure long lasting benefits for the community. We feel strongly that this model should be continued with the implementation of all Tier 1 and Tier 2 projects and a portion of the Tier 3 projects.

07 Acknowledgements

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ARLA



TreePeople



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09 Appendix

The following Appendices are available online at
<https://www.cityplants.org/urban-forest-equity-collective/>

- Community Action Toolkit:
includes the survey instrument and workshop agenda used in Central Alameda
- USC Central Alameda Equity Map
- UFEC Tier 1 Planting Projections
- Los Angeles Urban Forest Equity Streets Guidebook
- Los Angeles Urban Forest Equity Design Guidebook