

## Why Santa Fe Needs an Urban Forester Now

The urban forest in a city provides many benefits, including mitigation of heat island effects through shading and transpiration, stormwater interception and cleaning, carbon capture and storage, buffering of winds, reduction of air pollution, increasing the network of support for native fauna, and contributing to a decrease in crime and an increase in overall satisfaction with life in the city, both for residents and visitors. As the effects of climate change magnify the stresses of city life, it will be increasingly important that we work to maintain the urban forest we have now and develop it further in the future. Many areas of our urban forest are marked by old trees that are in decline, which brings up issues of responsibility and liability for care of these trees. Climate change is creating further threats to our forest as prolonged droughts make plants more vulnerable to pests and diseases. Watering our trees in the winter has become a critical component of tree care as our winters have gotten warmer and drier. The challenges to the health and viability of our urban forest are increasing all the time.

The primary responsibility of an Urban Forester is to help create and implement plans for the continual development and care of the urban forest. Duties associated with this include: creating budgets and helping secure funding for projects related to the forest; creating and maintaining a plan for the ongoing development and care of the urban forest, including removal of trees as needed, planting of new trees, irrigation and fertility maintenance, and pest/disease control; developing and implementing an educational program for policy makers, for the general public, for schools, and for workers involved in the care of the urban forest; interacting with local groups to build an understanding of the benefits and support for the care of the urban forest; overseeing the inventory of the urban forest; staying abreast of current research and industry-related developments that affect our understanding of how best to develop and care for the urban forest; and insuring that all work activities related to the urban forest are performed in a professional manner. Santa Fe, our capitol city which is so dependent on tourism and still growing in population, does not have an Urban Forester. We need to hire an Urban Forester now to develop new programs to insure the health and benefits of our urban forest in an increasingly difficult environment.

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