



The City of Austin Urban Forestry Board

May 15, 2013

The Honorable Mayor Lee Leffingwell and Austin City Council Members
C/O the Austin City Clerk
2006 East 4th Street
Austin, Texas 78702

Mayor Leffingwell and Council Members:

Trees are increasingly shown as critical elements in humanizing an urban environment. Trees are essential to keep Austin a liveable city. As Austin grows in population, demands on our forest infrastructure increase; the same urbanization that creates a greater need for green infrastructure also creates more stress on the plants and trees that provide the critical benefits to the city.

Recent weather events, particularly the drought of 2011, have caused an unprecedented loss of public trees in Austin. This loss has left many dead trees standing, which is a real risk to public safety. In addition, we have had a significant loss of our green canopy in a time of increasing need for the benefits of trees. Meanwhile, Austin spends an average of one-third of the national average per capita per tree. Austin's rapid growth has resulted in a 42% increase in tree service demand in the last 7 years, making that spending gap worse.

In an effort to address the serious challenges affecting Austin's public trees, The Urban Forestry Board strongly urges the Mayor and Council to approve funding for the "Enhanced Urban Forestry Functions" in the unmet service demand in the FY 2013-14 Budget. Further, we recommend that critical Forestry funding be considered a priority in future budgets.

CC: Sara Hensley, Director, Austin PARD
Bert Lumbreras, Assistant City Manager
Marc Ott, City Manager