

Forklift Danceworks' *The Trees of Govalle*

Introduction and Objectives

Project Intention

Rooted in Forklift's nearly 15 year history of creating unique, community-based civic events, *The Trees of Govalle* will be a free, outdoor performance featuring the employees of the Urban Forestry Division. The intention of the performance is to highlight the hard and often hidden work of the Urban Forestry employees who maintain and nurture our vital green spaces, in order to educate the public about their work and the indispensable role of parks in all of our daily lives. Involving Austin artists and Govalle-Johnston Terrace community members as well, *The Trees of Govalle* will reveal stories about these employees and the neighborhood community members who care deeply about this park and our public green spaces.

Project Objectives

Create a performance featuring the employees of Urban Forestry that:

- Educates Austinites about Urban Forestry, its employees, and the work they do for the city every day.
- Educates Austinites about the important role that urban forests play in our community.
- Brings Austinites to a closer understanding of both the work and the creative lives of Urban Forestry and the communities they serve, illuminating and humanizing their efforts which are often invisible and taken for granted.

Educational Value to the Urban Forestry Division

Providing, protecting and preserving the highest quality care of Austin's urban forest to support a sustainable and livable Austin, the Urban Forestry Division plays an integral role in how Austinites experience their urban environment. For 15 years, Forklift Danceworks has honed a creative approach that brings together an organization and its community for a transformative event. Using storytelling and arresting visual imagery, Forklift's performance events harness the power of live, personal connections to shift public perspective and build meaningful relationships between an organization and the people it serves. Partnering with Forklift will showcase the Urban Forestry Division's commitment to community engagement, public education, and contributing to Austin's rich civic life.

As well, Forklift Danceworks performances are known to create extraordinary media, branding and PR opportunities—generating extensive publicity and press, as well as authentic and meaningful connections between an organization and its stakeholders and customers. Based on the media impressions and value of past projects, Forklift anticipates that this collaboration would create between 500,000 - 10 million media impressions.

This collaborative project will increase pride and morale among Urban Forestry employees, while creating rich and lasting connections between neighborhood residents, other Austinites, the city employees, and this city park. Results from past Forklift's past civic projects include: 100% of the performing employees from *The Trash Project* reported in a survey that the dance improved morale and pride in their job, while 97% agreed that it improved the image of city sanitation workers held by the general Austin public. Over 90% of audience members who attended *PowerUP* reported that the dance improved their appreciation of the work of Austin Energy employees, while 95% of participating employees stated that the dance improved morale, pride and the public's understanding of their daily work.

Approach and Methods

Forklift Danceworks will present *The Trees of Govalle* on April 11 and 12, 2015 in Austin's Govalle Park. The performance will be created in partnership with the Austin Parks and Recreation Department, Urban Forestry Division.

Project Milestones and Time Frame

Phase 1 - Initial Research: December 2014 - January 2015

Artistic Director Allison Orr, Associate Artistic Director Krissie Marty and their collaborators will gather information about the employees and work of Urban Forestry, spending an estimated 100+ hours shadowing and getting to know the employees who do this work.

Phase 2 - Project Coordination and Recording: February 2015

Forklift will develop choreographic concepts in collaboration with the participating employees, and finalize what equipment will be used and which employees will participate. Logistical considerations for audience seating, parking and other details will be finalized with partners, especially the Fusebox Festival. Composer Graham Reynolds will record initial sonic material.

Phase 3 - Rehearsal: March - April 2015

The scenic design will be finalized and rehearsals will begin. The outdoor site will be Govalle Park, providing ample space for the performance area, audience seating, and parking.

Phase 4 - Performance: April 2015

The free evening-length performance will take place twice, April 11th and 12th 2015, with a target audience of 4,000, or 2,000 audience members per show.

Phase 5 - Assessment: May 2015

Forklift will begin to engage Urban Forestry, performers, participants, artists, and audience in assessing the project.

During Phases 1 – 4, Forklift will work with PR company Giant Noise, which has extensive experience with national and statewide publicity, to market the project. Forklift will publicize events and activities to our list of 3,500+ supporters via email and mailed publicity, as well as initiate a comprehensive social media campaign. Forklift will also work with Urban Forestry and our producing partners to identify and actualize additional media opportunities.

Project Assessment

Forklift has a history of demonstrated success producing large-scale civic performances, and the milestones listed above follow our proven methods and timelines. Forklift will document and evaluate the success of the project by surveying and tallying audience members, noting the audience's real-time response to the work. We will also collect post-performance feedback from the participating artists, performers, and other members of Urban Forestry that will assess their overall experience of creating and participating in the project. The production will be photographed and video recorded.

Govalle Roots: Post-Performance Engagement and Education

In addition to the milestones and budget submitted to Urban Forestry for *The Trees of Govalle* in this application, Forklift will continue to build on community momentum through an additional project entitled *Govalle Roots*. From May – December 2015, Forklift will engage *The Trees of Govalle* audiences and Govalle-Johnston Terrace residents around the topics of performance impact, shared green space, and impacting communities through performance and collaboration, as well as document these conversations and the longer-term impacts of the performance. This ongoing documentation and assessment during *Govalle Roots* will be provided to Urban Forestry upon request. As well, there are additional potential educational engagement opportunities for Urban Forestry during the six-month *Govalle Roots* that we would love to explore.