INTRODUCTION

The California Initiative to Reduce Carbon & Limit Emissions 1.0 (CIRCLE 1.0) is the first of multiple successful CAL FIRE Urban and Community Forestry grants. Awarded to the California Urban Forests Council (CaUFC), in partnership with the Western Chapter of the International Society of Arboriculture (WCISA), and West Coast Arborists, Inc. (WCA, Inc.). The goal of CIRCLE 1.0 was to sequester and avoid carbon by tree planting, while also improving California Urban Forests in disadvantaged communities or DACs (as defined by CalEnviroscreen 2.0), by planting over 1,350 trees and mobilizing communities to care for their urban forests. Planted in the Fall of 2016, residents and the municipalities have since maintained the trees. The CIRCLE 1.0 grant engaged ten municipalities and over 1,000 volunteers statewide.

CIRCLE 1.0

An Invest From the Ground Up Campaign

In 2015, the CIRCLE 1.0 project partners saw an opportunity to use their statewide reach to improve urban forests in DACs. The project commenced planting over 1,350 trees to mitigate the effects of atmospheric carbon and engaged communities to care for their urban forests. A portion of trees succumbed to the urban environment, and after replanting efforts, 1,245 trees have fully established across the state.

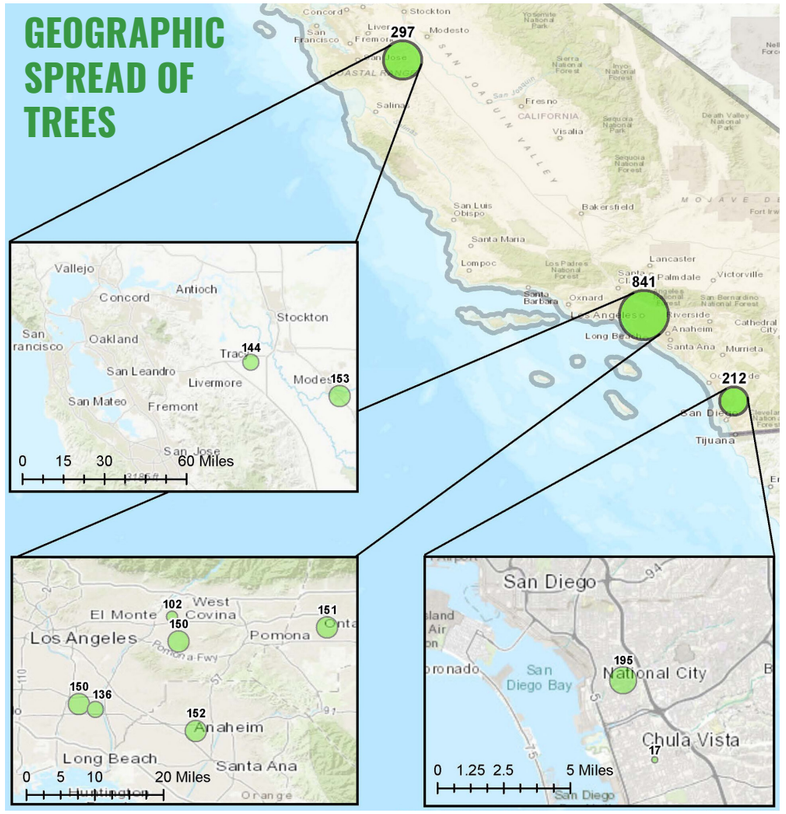
CIRCLE 1.0 advanced a practical project model, centered on community outreach campaigns. In each of the ten cities we initially partnered with, we cultivated the ownership of the trees by the community through tree planting events and watering agreements. In each location, the city partnered with a local community group.

The project team created a model for success:

- Leverage each partner's unique position in the urban forestry community.
- Partner with municipalities by utilizing WCA, Inc.'s status as a municipal contractor.
- Utilize CaUFC's network and community organizing.
- Experience to engage the communities where we planted trees.
- Use CaUFC's marketing resources to create an outreach campaign.
- Tap into the WCISA network of arborists for tree planting events, and technical support.
- Secure an agreement from the city or residents to water the trees.
- Receive a commitment from the cities to add all trees planted into their inventory and long term maintenance plan.

Our model put ownership in the hands of the community. Equally as important, we equipped the community with the information necessary to care for their trees.

GEOGRAPHIC SPREAD OF TREES



MUNICIPAL PARTNERS

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CIRCLE 1.0 2016–2019

California Initiative to Reduce & Limit Emissions 1.0 (CIRCLE 1.0)

MOBILIZING COMMUNITIES

To reach our goal of authentic community engagement, we made an effort to partner with local community groups. The community groups canvassed for watering agreements shared our educational material and helped coordinate volunteers for planting events. Many more organizations such as Boy/Girl Scout groups, high school clubs, and sports teams were involved in our efforts.

Our partner community groups:

- Anaheim Beautiful
- Tracy Tree Foundation
- Ceres Garden Club
- Pitch in Paramount
- Baldwin Park Teen Center
- *CaUFC & WCA, Inc.

**Acted as a community group for cities without an official partner*

One of our goals was to engage the communities we worked with while also providing them with industry-level tree care knowledge. We achieved this through our residential tree adoption program and tree planting events. 30% of trees were planted through community group canvassing efforts to residents with eligible parkways. WCA, Inc. then followed up with 20 monitoring visits spread throughout the grant term to assess tree health, perform one structural pruning, and as needed site modifications. Monitoring visits increased the survival rates of trees by holding watering agreement signers accountable.

TREE PLANTING EVENTS

The CIRCLE team, partner municipality, and local community group worked together to coordinate tree planting events in each city. Over 1,000 volunteers played a role in improving their urban forests. Many of the tree plantings took place in the Fall of 2016.

With the support of WCISA, Certified Arborists helped facilitate events, and ensured the trees were planted to ISA standards. Arborists were also able to answer tree-related questions for residents who wanted to know more.

We were successful in bringing communities together through urban forestry. The community group, Anaheim Beautiful, enjoyed the opportunity to "*beautify our city and create a better environment*" and "*work closely with Anaheim Parks.*"

QUANTIFIABLE OUTCOMES

THE TREES WE PLANTED

A goal of CIRCLE was to ensure the maximum amount of environmental benefits from the trees planted while considering the right tree for the right place.

We used iTree Planting to quantify species benefits and narrow down a list of trees diverse enough to use in various urban environments. It was important to prioritize atmospheric carbon reduction to meet the grant guideline goal of mitigating the effects of climate change. We coordinated with our municipal and community group partners to identify the planting locations. After locations were determined, we revisited the species list to select species most appropriate. Many of the trees were for residential communities; as a result, we chose species that would be successful in parkways and tree-wells. We selected large growing species for cities that agreed to water the trees and care for them in their parks.

Additionally, we encouraged municipalities to select a diverse set of species to create a resilient urban forest, given the increased risk of pests and drier conditions.

MANAGING MORTALITY

Young urban trees are susceptible to a tremendous amount of harm. We worked with our municipal partners to identify the best possible locations for 15-gallon trees. Nevertheless, 25% of the trees originally planted failed. We noticed a high amount of vandalism in open spaces located in DACs; this often led to tree death. Additionally, trees planted a year and a half before the drought ended, an unfavorable environment. The drought, paired with small amounts of neglect, led to the second-highest cause of mortality.

Most common reasons for tree death (in order):

- Vandalism
- Lack of water /drought stress
- Transplant stress

When mortality started to become an issue, WCA, Inc. began to replace trees as a 100% match. We eventually requested a budget modification to maintain our project goal of urban forest improvement. Replacement plantings accounted for two hundred seventy trees, replacing trees that died from lack of water and transplant stress. We identified replanting locations based off of current success and commitments of tree care from our partner municipalities.

FUTURE SUCCESS

CIRCLE 1.0 was our first attempt at delivering a statewide planting and education initiative. We have capitalized on our successes and been able to learn from our challenges.

Since CIRCLE 1.0, we have delivered two more statewide projects and are in our fourth installment of this program.

Our partner cities have also been able to take advantage of the momentum gained from CIRCLE 1.0.

- The City of Anaheim continues to host successful Arbor Days and work with Anaheim Beautiful.
- The City of Paramount was a partner in our 2.0 campaign and has applied for grant funding on their own.
- The City of Tracy recently hosted a large scale Arbor Day Tree planting event with a grant of its own.
- National City is working to meet deliverables on their grant.

We are proud to have created a ripple effect of urban forest improvements in the communities we partnered beside. Through engagement, we were able to leave lasting improvements beyond the trees planted.