The Outdoor Circle Recommendations for New Development:
Tree Canopy and Green Infrastructure Standards

June 2024

Overview: All new developments within the City and County of Honolulu should integrate comprehensive tree canopy and green infrastructure standards to enhance urban resilience, mitigate climate change impacts, cool surface and air temperatures, reduce runoff water, beautify planned developments, and improve the quality of life for all residents.

Objectives:

1. **Exceed Canopy Cover Goals:**
   - New developments should strive to achieve a tree canopy cover of at 50% of surface area of project, exceeding the city's overall minimum goal of 35%. Only large, new developments can accomplish this goal.
   - Ensure sufficient space for trees to reach full maturity, including adequate planting spaces and overhead clearance. Tree wells should be large and allow for trunk growth from the beginning.

2. **Prioritize Tree Health and Diversity:**
   - Utilize diverse species selection, prioritizing drought-tolerant species to promote ecosystem resilience. Be aware that canopy shade trees may not be native or indigenous. Indigenous trees and vegetation can complement canopy shade trees throughout the property.
   - Implement best practices for tree planting, care, and maintenance to ensure long-term tree health and growth.
   - Utilize professional landscape architects and arborists in planning and delivery process.

3. **Integrate Green Infrastructure:**
   - Incorporate green infrastructure elements such as green roofs, green walls, and permeable surfaces to complement the tree canopy where possible.
   - Design landscapes that support storm water management, reduce runoff, and enhance urban cooling.

4. **Protect Existing Vegetation:**
   - Conduct tree assessments prior to any development activity to identify and protect existing healthy trees. Some trees may already qualify for Exceptional Tree status and should be nominated if so.
   - Implement measures to minimize construction impacts on trees, including protecting root zones and ensuring adequate space for canopy expansion.

1314 S. King Street #306 | Honolulu, Hawai'i 96814
T: 808-593-0300 | mail@outdoorcircle.org | www.outdoorcircle.org

5. **Plant with the aim of fostering Honolulu's future Exceptional Trees**—Plan for trees planted today reaching maturity and full canopy spread many decades into the future. This will require special focus of species, canopy size and conditions.

Requirements:

1. **Tree Planting and Maintenance:**
   - Plant a sufficient number of trees to achieve the targeted canopy cover.
   - Ensure newly planted trees have more than adequate space for root growth and canopy development. Consider underground infrastructure to avoid conflicts in the future.
   - Implement a maintenance plan for newly planted trees, including watering, mulching, and pruning, for at least the first five years.

2. **Development Design:**
   - Design developments to provide sufficient high-quality , non-compacted soil volume and quality for tree growth. One main indicator of success of future trees is uncompacted, quality and large quantity of soil.
   - Avoid any overhead and underground obstructions that could limit tree canopy development. All electrical and other utilities should be buried with good clearance for trees to grow and not have conflicts in impacts to roots or canopies—consider timeframes extending decades in the future when trees reach maturity.
   - Silva cells might be incorporated depending on placement in the new development.
   - Incorporate green spaces and corridors to enhance habitat connectivity and biodiversity. This also forms a basis for walkable paths and greenways.

3. **Sustainability Practices:**
   - Use water-efficient irrigation systems to support tree health and sustainability.
   - Select building materials and design elements that reduce heat absorption and promote cooling.
   - Integrate renewable energy sources and energy-efficient systems to complement green infrastructure.

4. **Community and Stakeholder Engagement:**
   - Engage with community organizations, residents, and stakeholders in the planning and implementation of tree planting and green infrastructure projects.
   - Provide educational resources and opportunities for community involvement in tree care and maintenance.

5. **Monitoring and Reporting:**
   - Conduct regular assessments of tree health and canopy cover in new developments. Ensure professional, well-regarded arborists are utilized.
   - Report progress and outcomes to the Department of Parks and Recreation's Division of Urban Forestry and interested community groups.
   - Adjust strategies based on monitoring data and feedback from stakeholders to ensure the long-term success of tree canopy goals.

Implementation:

1. **Policy**
   - Ensure that tree canopy and green spaces are first among equals in development.
   - Ensure top arborists and landscape architects are involved before, during and after construction.

2. **Resource Allocation:**
   - Allocate proper funding and resources for the implementation and long-term maintenance of tree canopy and green infrastructure elements.
   - Leverage public-private partnerships to support and enhance development projects if appropriate.

3. **Collaboration and Support:**
   - Foster collaboration between city departments, developers, and community organizations to achieve the directive's objectives.
   - Provide technical assistance and resources to developers to facilitate the integration of tree canopy and green infrastructure standards.

By adhering to these green infrastructure and canopy shade tree guidelines, new developments within the City and County of Honolulu will contribute to a greener, more resilient urban environment, supporting the city's overall goals of climate mitigation, adaptation, and enhanced quality of life for all residents.