TOWN FOREST

VISION: Paonia is home to a thriving, safe, and uniquely beloved town forest that is both resilient and adaptive to a changing climate and the aging of individuals within the larger canopy.

VALUES:
- The unique character and wonderful quality of life our town tree canopy provides
- The ecosystem services that our urban forest provides the Town and its residents
- The increased value of real estate that our town canopy provides
- The increased walkability of the historic neighborhoods that is enhanced by the town forest

OVERVIEW: The character of Paonia and quality of life enjoyed by residents is shaped in no small part by the substantial presence of our town's forest. Our trees are an essential part of our green urban infrastructure. They temper the harsh climate by providing shade and cooling and filtering air and light. They create habitat for a diverse ecosystem of butterflies, beneficial insects, birds, squirrels, chipmunks and other creatures. Mature urban trees are one of the most common indicators of real estate value, and the combined value of the 435 right of way trees in Paonia's 2022 Street Tree Inventory is just over $4 million. [1] Many stakeholders manage or oversee sectors of the urban forest. Trees on public lands are cared for by city departments and local nonprofits, as well as private property owners. Successful management of our Town forest depends on cooperation and regular engaugement across stakeholders.

All urban trees require management as they mature in the landscape. To increase tree diversity and canopy resilience in Town, new tree species must be consciously curated and properly planted and cared for. To sustain the urban forest's vital functions in Paonia, funding is needed to take care of existing trees and plant new ones. As Paonia's urban forest ages and comes under increasing stress from drought, increased heat, and high winds, formalizing care for the town forest is critical. In particular, as trees reach maturity new smaller trees must be planted adjacent to them to support successful succession.The 2021 Paonia Street Tree Inventory provides a robust framework with direction for street tree care and the establishment of regular and professional maintenance and replacement that will support their longevity and reduce risk to the Town. However, this report is just the first step, and several follow-on actions are suggested in this Plan to establish the quality of service required to maintain our valuable urban canopy.

POLICY TREES-1: Monitor, properly care for and carefully replace street and park trees to maintain and improve the Town's urban forest.

POLICY TREES-2 Conduct Urban Tree inventory every 5yrs or include street and park tree health assessment and replacement plan in annual budget.

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[1] Paonia Tree Inventory Report Final, pg 15

POLICY TREE-3: Provide greater support and accountability for homeowners' maintenance of trees in public right-of-way. And engage and empower citizens to participate in street tree care.

POLICY TREE-4: Expand the urban forest to mitigate urban heat island effect, support walkability, preserve real estate value, preserve small water cycling, and improve upstream watershed health.

POLICY TREE-5: Ensure successful succession in a changing climate by supporting programs that plant new trees at least three years prior to old ones being removed.

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