Milpitas Community Advisory Commission
2013 WORK PLAN
Annual Recurring Tasks

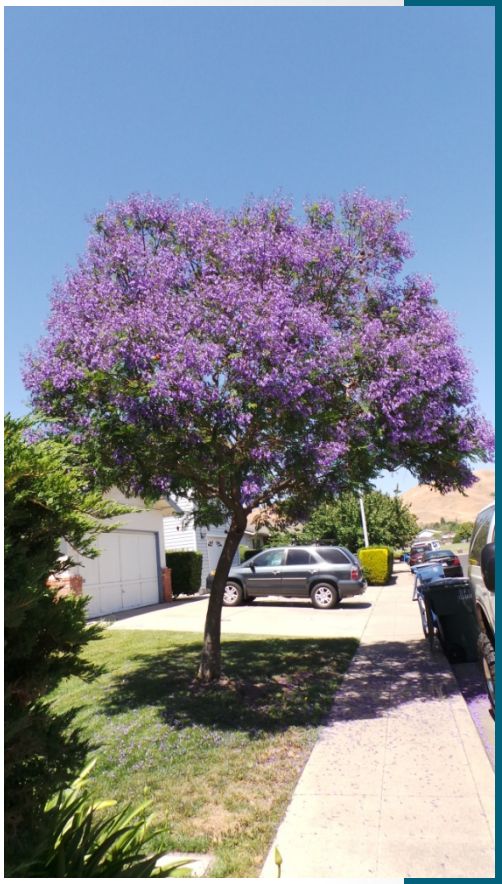
Task		Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
1.	Heritage tree nominations	X				X					X		
2.	CDBG public hearing process / workshop for new commissioners		X	E									
3.	Make a Difference Day									X	E		
4.	Neighborhood Beautification Awards		X				X	X		R	E	C	
5.	National Night Out		X				X		E	R			
6.	Annual Work Plan												X
7.	CAC Budget/Donations Strategy							X					
8.	Adopt-A-Neighborhood/Graffiti				X				X				
9.	Spring Cleaning Day	X	X		X	E							
10.	Town Hall Meeting												X

Legend: X= Discussion & Planning; E = Event; C = Ceremony; R = Results Review

Short-term Goals/Projects (prioritized)

1. Tree Planting – Promote tree planting through outreach and tree protection awareness
2. Outreach Program – Conduct an outreach program to the citizens of Milpitas to obtain feedback on community issues
3. Volunteerism Program – Conduct a program to encourage Milpitas citizens to volunteer
4. Cleanup of Areas – Determine areas in Milpitas and encourage their redevelopment or conduct a program similar to the "Adopt A Highway" program
5. Expand the Neighborhood Watch Program – Work with City staff to expand the Neighborhood Watch Program
6. Milpitas Cable TV/Magazine Community Outreach

The Green Tree Sub-Committee



Presented by: Ray Maglalang, Vanlan Truong, Jackie Holland

6.5.2013

Introduction

The Green Tree Committee (GTC) is a passionate sub-committee from the Community Advisory Commission. The three commissioners, Jacqueline Holland, Ray Maglalang, and Vanlan Truong have come together as a think tank with the purpose of planting, preserving, and protecting the Milpitas city environment through education, citizen participation, and advocacy.

Emissions Sources

- **Transportation** – vehicle miles traveled
- **Energy** – electricity and natural gas used in the built environment
- **Stationary Sources** – direct emissions from the Newby Island Resource Recovery Park; stationary sources permitted by the BAAQMD
- **Solid Waste** – methane emissions from community waste sent to landfills
- **Off-road Equipment** – emissions from construction and from lawn and garden equipment/vehicles
- **Water and Wastewater** – energy required to extract, filter, move, and treat water consumed and/or treated
- **Light Rail** – electricity used by the Santa Clara Valley Transit Authority for commuters utilizingMilpitas light rail stops
- **Direct Wastewater** – Milpitas's share of fugitive emissions from the San Jose/Santa Clara Water Pollution Control Plant

Source: Climate Action Plan, 2013

Milpitas' Climate Action Plan

- Adopted May 7th, 2013
- The Green Tree sub-committee can partner with the City of Milpitas' Climate Action Plan to unify like interests

City Climate Action Plan

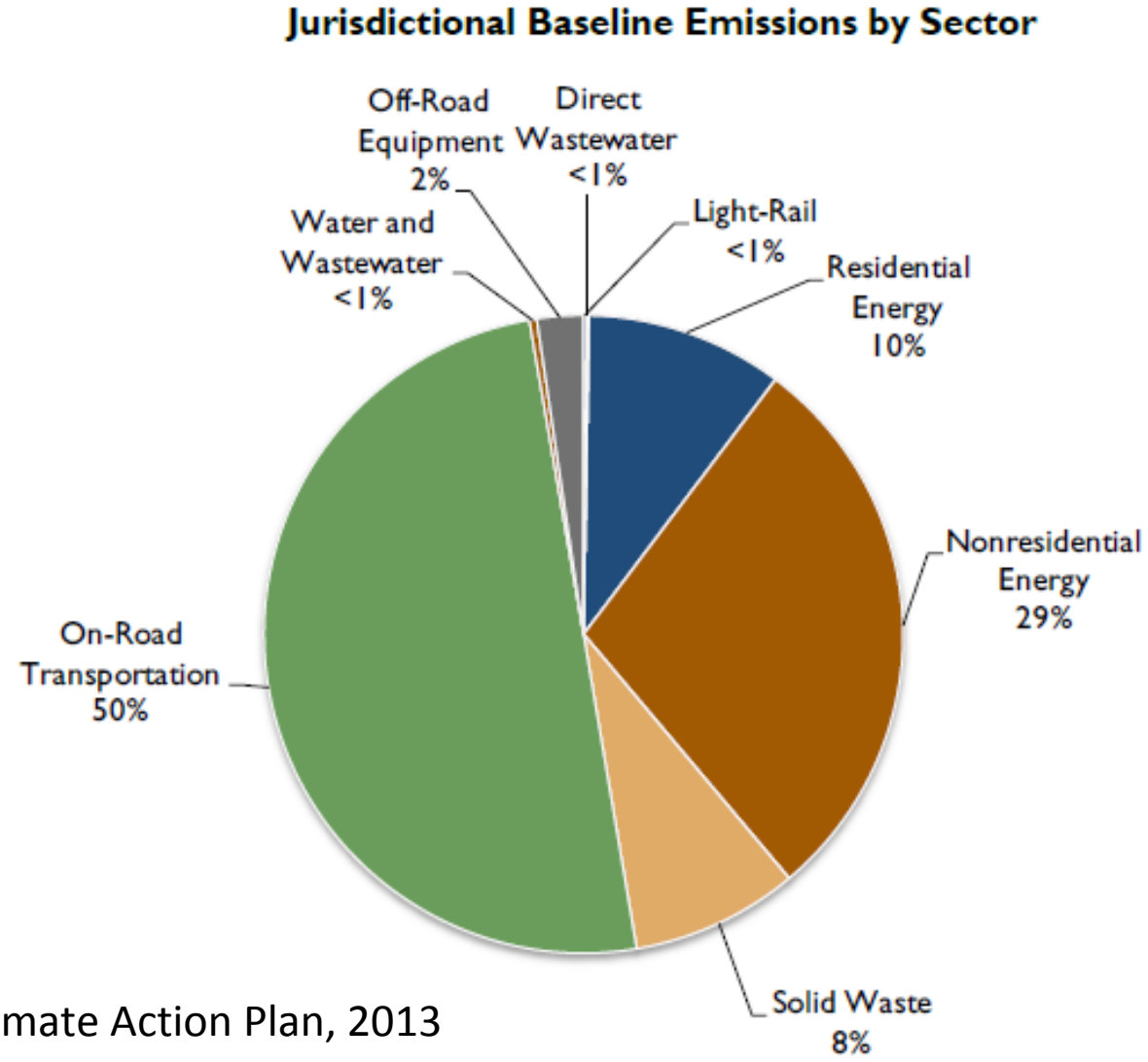
"This Climate Action Plan (CAP) is designed to streamline environmental review of future development projects in the City of Milpitas consistent with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines Section 15183.5(b) and the Bay Area Air Quality Management District (BAAQMD) CEQA Air Quality Guidelines.

The CAP identifies a strategy, reduction measures, and implementation strategies the City will use to achieve the State-recommended greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions reduction target of 15% below 2005 emissions levels by 2020."

Source: Climate Action Plan, 2013

- Adopted May 7th, 2013

Based on 2005 reports



Source: Climate Action Plan, 2013

Our Mission

To plant, preserve and protect the greening of the City of Milpitas through education, citizen participation, volunteering and advocacy.

Our Vision

The City of Milpitas beautified and distinguished by it’s trees and healthy environmental quality

Main Objective

- Plant 500 trees efficiently and effectively with the intention of beautifying the city.

Goals

- Making a statement
  - We want a city that aesthetically makes an impact when a person enters. This tree project can give Milpitas a clearer identity, much like Palo Alto is known for their narrow streets and lush trees.
- Environmental Impact
  - The GTC plan to: cool the city, beautify the city, help wildlife and plants, save energy
- City Impact
  - The GTC plan to aid in: increasing property value, promote social and educational value, increase good health, increase economic stability, promote business and create an distinguished image of Milpitas as “The Greenest City in the Bay Area”
  - Competition between greenest cities are: San Francisco, Austin TX, and many more.

Target Audience

- Who is this cause targeted to?
  - City of Milpitas residents , service organizations, Milpitas associations, religious institutions, social service agnecy, MUSD, small business owners, S-corp. and C-corp businesses, hotels and medical offices
- What does the community need to know?
  - We need the community to provide: Time, Talent and Resources
- What will hold their interest?
  - Wanting to be a part of the Green Tree project
  - Volunteering hours
  - Food and Beverages provided
  - “Memory Trees”
  - Youth to Adults can participate with community service

Benefits

- Beautify the city
- Provide more habitats for wildlife and plants
- Improves Air Quality
- Positive increase in social and educational values
- Save energy (a cooler city means less electricity use)
- Improves Public Health
- Supports the Local Economy
- Lucrative: A healthy, beautiful and clean city attracts residents and businesses
- Create a distinguished image of Milpitas
  - Palo Alto, Los Gatos, Saratoga are all aesthically beautiful cities for their landscaping and foliage.
- Tree planting unifies city residents and brings people together
- Provide settings for picnics, games, etc.
  - Can decrease obesity rates if a higher frequency of people go outside

Risk Assessment

After a thorough risk assessment, the GTC has concluded that there are some needs and problems to be addressed:

- **Budget**: The estimated budget to plant 500 trees in the city of Milpitas is roughly $40,000.00.
- **Location**: Where are trees allowed to be planted?
- **Approval:** Do we have city approval and the city planner's approval to plan 500 trees?
- **Timing**: When will trees be planted and how many will be planted per week? Per month? Per year? To reach the goal of 500
- **City Impact**: Extra water will need to be irrigated if there is no water supply to keep a tree alive; also if the trees are deciduous and the leaves fall to the ground, what efforts will be made to clean up the foliage?
- **Tree type:** What types of trees need to be planted? Who is the expert to plant such trees?

Minimizing Risk: Strategies

The Green Emissions Committee have planned contingency options in the case that problems, needs, or issues arise.

- **BUDGET**: With a growing list of companies, individuals, and organizations, the GTC will systematically call, email, and meet in-person with business owners for donations.
- **LOCATION**: The GTC is resigned to begin outward and then move inward towards the city with planting trees. With careful consideration of the Milpitas City Planner, property laws, and irrigation, the GTC is already researching where trees can be planted.
- **APPROVAL**: The GTC are in active communication with the Staff Liaison, Felix Reliford, to see where trees are appropriate to plant.
- **TIMING**: The GTC has completed a timeline with action steps to plant 10 trees a week over the course of 8 months.
- **CITY IMPACT:** The GTC will speak with an arborist and the city planner and determine the best solution towards irrigation and tree species.
- **TREE TYPE:** As mentioned above, the GTC will speak with an arborist to determine tree species.

Procedures/Scope of Work

- **Funding:** Serious and committed efforts in asking for donations to fund the project.
- **Training:** Volunteers will need to be trained on digging hole size, tree planting methods, trained on safety on the day of the event
- **Location:** The GTC will have the efforts of locating exactly where ~500 trees will need to be planted with the intent of knowing how to fund digging holes, water irrigation, and City laws.
- **Pre-Dug areas:** Areas have been proposed to be pre-dug during Monday – Friday with the aid of construction companies or hardware companies donating their tools, staff or/and time
- **Actual workload:** Volunteers will arrive on Saturday and plant 10 trees around Milpitas as a unified effort.

Location of Tree Initiative

- Milpitas
  - Tree locations will be determined with CAC and City Staff
    - All city parks with staff assistance
    - Residences without trees using stewardship agreement w/document
    - All city properties with city staff supervision
      - Fire/police stations
    - Map of Milpitas Boundaries

Date of Event

- Proposed Start Date: Spring 2014
  - Initiated once the yearly budget is met
  - Focus on Spring, Fall and Winter of 2014
    - Optimum time to plant trees
    - Strategically chosen for 500 tree goal
    - Strategically chosen for planting chosen tree species

Time Table

	Description of Work	Start and End Dates
Phase One	Research & Proposals	**March 2013-June 2013**
Phase Two	Begin Marketing, Donations, Communications with the city planners, and begin with acquiring permits, get list of volunteers, create data analysis charts	**July 2013-December 2013**
Phase Three	Plant ~500 trees in scheduled timeline	**January 2014-December 2014**

Budget

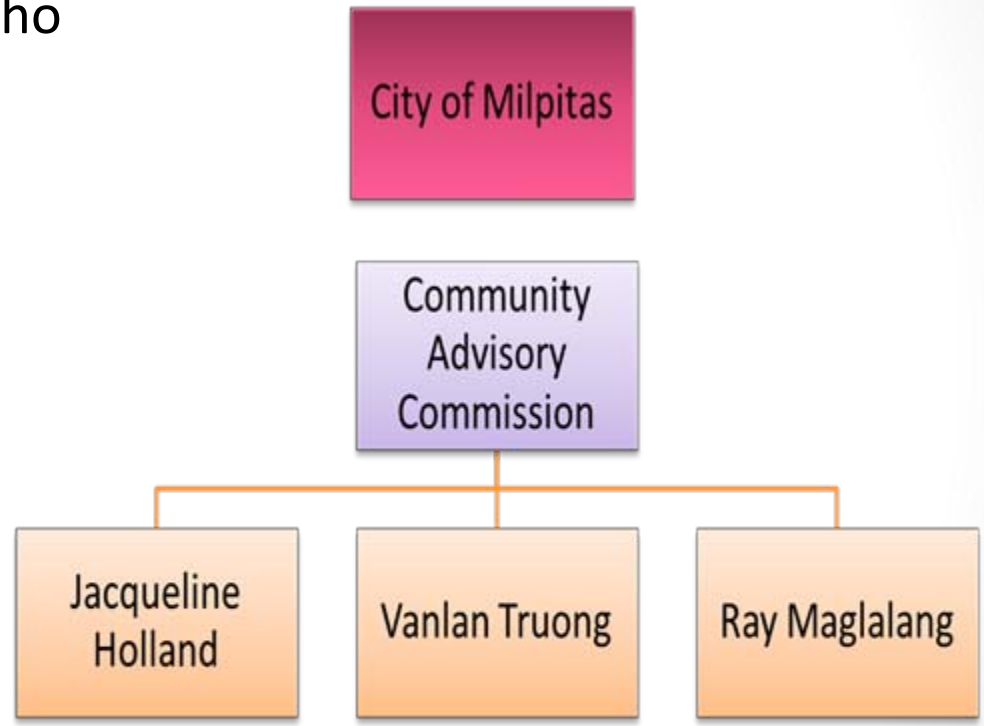
- Main obstacle
  - Where and how will we get funding for this project?
- Possible Endorsements
  - Our City Forest Association
    - In the year 2000, City of Milpitas staff paid 40-45 dollars per tree
  - Grants
    - PG&S, Santa Clara Water District
    - State and federal
    - Association of arborists
  - Business sponsorship
    - Cisco, Johnson/Johnson, Tesla, Google, Apple,
    - Hotels, Service organizations, grocery stores, real estate developers
    - We plan to use a Letter of Solicitation and Tax ID for donation write-offs
  - Community Donations
    - Religious Organizations
    - Milpitas Associations

Abbreviated Analysis

	Description of Work	Anticipated Costs
Phase One	Only cost is time	**0.00**
Phase Two	• Online PR and Marketing: $0.00 • Donation letters: $50 • Donation Mail: $23.00 • Donation Email: $0.00 • Other: $ 2,827 • Permits: Unknown • Data and Analysis Charts	**~3,000.00**
Phase Three	• Purchase wholesale trees with delivery and planting costs: $37,000 • Donations for food & beverage for volunteers: $100	**~37,100.00**
	Total	**$40,100.00**

Assisting Team

- To complete the goal, who will be in our network?
  - City Planner
  - Permit office
  - Arborists
  - Public works
  - Parks and Recreation
  - Community Advisory Commission
  - City Council
  - Community residents
  - Volunteers



Marketing: How do we communicate our message?

- Yelp Events
  - A place where yelpers in the community can interact and attend events and then yelp them afterwards
  - I will speak with the South Bay executive that is in charge of yelp and see if we can have a hosted yelp event or sponsorship for a green initiative
- Event Brite
  - An online ticket service that tracks who has RSVP'ed and can search for events in specific areas, including free events
- Web Page
  - Jackie Holland will create a webpage for the Green Tree endeavors and add links and helpful tips
- Logo
  - Jackie Holland will create a special logo for The Green Tree sub-committee

Marketing: How do we send out our message (cont.)

- Milpitas Post
  - The Green Tree Sub-Committee write an article for the post
- Free blogs and other print and media services (to be researched)
- Speak in front of Milpitas High Schools/Junior High
  - With aid of the Youth Advisory Commission
  - Incentive: Volunteering credit
- Starbucks bulletin boards
- Create a Facebook page
- Have someone responsible for tweeting the events (per our target audience)

Marketing: Evaluation

- How will we evaluate our efforts?
  - Track how many volunteers we have by just having them give us their email and phone number and we send them an event brite ticket
    - Exclusivity sells because if we make this seem like it is a limited event, people will be more apt to participating
    - Event Brite will give you exactly the amount of people who have confirmed and canceled the date
- Feedback emails post-event
  - Receive feedback and seek volunteers for next year
  - Maybe have them be elite musketeer members?
  - Survey Monkey
- Excel
  - Track trees, budget, dates, and times

Marketing: How do we make this attractive to residents?

- Use of media
- Sponsorships
- Advertising
- Exclusivity?
- Having a bigger goal/effort for being green
- Sentimentality: We can have “Memory Trees” planted and if they want a plaque or something that hangs from the tree, they can pay for a minimal price (if that is allowed, I am unsure if we are allowed to take money?)
- Donations: Water/Food/Gardening Materials/Money
- Post professional pictures on Facebook
- Have professional photographers come out pro bono and take photos (if feasible)

Marketing Responsibility

- Marketing Lead: Jackie
- Marketing consult: Ray Maglalang
- Marketing consult: Vanlan Truong
- Marketing consult: CAC committee

Evaluation Criteria

- Did we achieve what we set out to do?
- Did it come in on budget?
- What were the intended/unintended outcomes?
- How will we measure effectiveness?
  - Online resources, excel, media
- What tools do we use to measure our success?
  - Excel, Event Brite, Survey Monkey

Endorsements

- Our City Forest Association
  - In the year 2000, City of Milpitas staff paid 40-45 dollars per tree
- Grants
  - PG&S, Santa Clara Water District
  - State and federal
  - Association of arborists
- Business sponsorship
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  - We plan to use a Letter of Solicitation and Tax ID for donation write-offs
- Community Donations
  - Religious Organizations
  - Milpitas Associations

Future Ideas/Goals

- Planting a community garden
  - Helps feed the needy for free, is green, allows better air quality, and can help people who are hungry.
- Solar Panels
  - Driving a city-wide effort for Solar Panels
- Recycling Day
  - Sponsor a day where uncommon items are recycled and picked up from residences
    - Electronics, Batteries, Toner, etc
- Community Flower Garden/Flower Walk
  - A beautiful trail or garden of flowers
    - Much like San Jose Japanese Gardens
- Every resident who purchases a home without a tree must either pay the city or plant a tree in their yard

Appendix

- America's Greenest Cities:
  - **Portland, Oregon**
  - **Austin, Texas**
  - **Minneapolis, Minnesota**
  - **Boulder, Colorado**
  - **Burlington, Vermont**
  - **Madison, Wisconsin**
  - **New York, New York**
  - **San Francisco, California**
  - **Santa Monica, California**
  - **Chicago, Illinois**

Community Advisory Commission
06/05/2013

Proposal for

The Green Tree Project

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I. Summary

Commissioners Jacqueline Holland, Ray Maglalang, and Vanlan Truong have united in the common goal of beautifying the city, promoting education about the environment and bring Milpitas residents together by volunteering. The proposed name for this sub-Committee is the Green Tree Committee (GTC). The purpose of this sub-Committee is planting, preserving, and protecting the Milpitas city environment through education, citizen participation, and advocacy.

The proposed cost for this annual project is approximately $40,000.00. The GTC anticipates asking for donations via campaigns and in-person to acquire the necessary donations for the cause of planting ~500 trees. The trees the GTC are interested in planting are 15 gallon trees that average $50.00 each. With the goal of 500 trees, the total average cost for solely trees for this project is $25,000.00. This cost includes taxes and freight. The included use of a staking system per tree is average $25.00 per tree which totals $12,500. For the marketing portion of flyers, news, and media announcements, the total cost comes out to be $3000.00. In Table A below is a representation of the total cost.

Estimated Cost of Planting 500 trees per year	
Average cost of tree $50 x 500	= $25,000.00
Staking System per tree $25 each	= $12,500.00
Flyers, News, Media Announcements	= $3,000.00
Total	= $40,500

Table A: Represents the anticipated budget of the project

With a systematic marketing plan, committed individuals asking for donations and widespread knowledge of the GTC's efforts, it is quite possible to plant 500 trees.

Together, the GTC plans to beautify Milpitas and make an impact with leading the green movement in our ever changing climate.

II. Introduction

The Green Emissions Committee (GTC) is a passionate sub-committee of the Community Advisory Commission. The three commissioners, Jacqueline Holland, Ray Maglalang, and Vanlan Truong have come together as a think tank with the purpose of planting, preserving, and protecting the Milpitas city environment through education, citizen participation, and advocacy.

The GTC sub-committee was founded in March 2013 with the united effort of launching an annual environmental goal with the backing of volunteers and Milpitas Residents. For 2013/2014, the GTC's goals are to plant 500 trees. Past efforts, materials and help has been passed down from the dedicated individuals from the city of Milpitas who used to lead "Arbor Day". The activities of the sub-committee include: uniting the community with the combined effort of making Milpitas cleaner, more beautiful and educated about their environment. The sub-committee also will be marketing and acquiring donations from corporate sponsorships, local Milpitas businesses, and individual donations.

The target population of the GTC's efforts is the citizens of Milpitas, Milpitas youth, and Milpitas visitors.

The Community Advisory Commission and related sub-committees actively help the City of Milpitas with the foundation of integrity, community effort, and accountability. The Community Advisory Commission has advanced Milpitas and helped the community since it was founded in July 20th, 1954.

III. Risk Assessment

After a thorough risk assessment, the GTC has concluded that there are some needs and problems to be addressed.

- Budget: The estimated budget to plant 500 trees in the city of Milpitas is roughly $50,000.00.
- Location: Where are trees allowed to be planted?
- Approval: Do we have city approval and the city planner's approval to plan 500 trees?
- Timing: When will trees be planted and how many will be planted per week? Per month? Per year? To reach the goal of 500
- Impact to the city: Extra water will need to be irrigated if there is no water supply to keep a tree alive; also if the trees are deciduous and the leaves fall to the ground, what efforts will be made to clean up the foliage?
- Tree type: What types of trees need to be planted? Who is the expert to plant such trees?

IV. Minimizing Risk: Strategies

The Green Emissions Committee have planned contingency options in the case that problems, needs, or issues arise.

- With a growing list of companies, individuals, and organizations, the GTC will systematically call, email, and meet in-person with business owners for donations.

- In regards to location, the GTC is resigned to begin outward and then move inward towards the city with planting trees. With careful consideration of the Milpitas City Planner, property laws, and irrigation, the GTC is already moving forward to understand where trees can be planted and developing an action plan.

- The GTC are in active communication with the Staff Liaison, Felix Reliford, to see where trees are deemed appropriate to plant.

- Timing: The GTC has completed a timeline with action steps to plant 10 trees a week over the course of 8 months.

- The GTC will speak with an arborist and the city planner and determine the best solution towards irrigation and tree species.

- As mentioned above, the GTC will speak with an arborist to determine tree species.

V. Goals/Objectives

The GTC have a wide array of goals encompassing this project. They include:

- Making a statement
    - We want a city that aesthetically makes an impact when entering. This tree project can give Milpitas a clearer identity, much like Palo Alto is known for their narrow streets and lush trees.
- Environmental Impact
    - The GTC plan to: cool the city, beautify the city, help wildlife and plants, save energy
- City Impact
    - The GTC plan to aid in: increasing property value, promote social and educational value, increase good health, increase economic stability, promote business and create an distinguished image of Milpitas as “The Greenest city in the Bay Area”
    - Competition between greenest cities are: San Francisco, Austin TX, and many more.

VI. Procedures/Scope of Work

Funding: Funding a project of this magnitude requires serious and committed efforts in asking for donations to fund the project. This means an email campaign, calling campaign, a door-to-door campaign, and asking for Corporate Sponsorships.

Training: Volunteers will need to be trained on digging hole size, tree planting methods, trained on safety on the day of the event and the CAC members and sub-Committee GTC will need to be trained on tree type, areas where we can plant trees, the law of how and what we can say when asking for donations and processes planting trees.

Locating: The GTC will have the efforts of locating exactly where ~500 trees will need to be planted with the intent of knowing how to fund digging holes, water irrigation, and City laws.

Pre-Dug areas: Areas have been proposed to be pre-dug during Monday – Friday with the aid of construction companies or hardware companies donating their tools, staff or/and time

Actual workload: Volunteers will arrive on Saturday and plant 10 trees around Milpitas as a unified effort.

VII. Timetable

Detailed information on the expected timetable for the project.

	Description of Work	Start and End Dates
Phase One	Research & Proposals	March 2013-June 2013
Phase Two	Begin Marketing, Donations, Communications with the city planners, and begin with acquiring permits, get list of volunteers, create data analysis charts	July 2013-December 2013
Phase Three	Plant ~500 trees in scheduled timeline	January 2014-December 2014

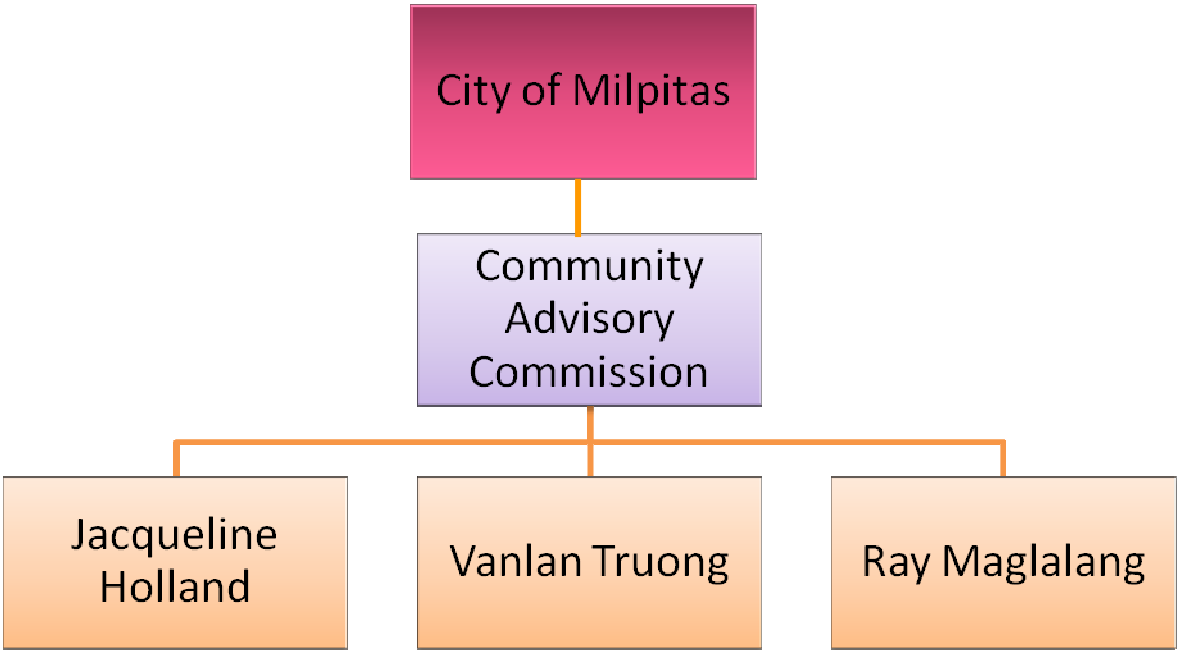
VIII. Budget

The proposed costs and budget of the project.

	Description of Work	Anticipated Costs
Phase One	Only cost is time	0.00
Phase Two	• Online PR and Marketing: $0.00 • Donation letters: $50 • Donation Mail: $23.00 • Donation Email: $0.00 • Other: $ 2,827 • Permits: Unknown • Data and Analysis Charts	3,000.00
Phase Three	• Purchase wholesale trees with delivery and planting costs: $37,000 • Donations for food & beverage for volunteers: $100	37,100.00
	Total	$40,100.00

IX. Key Personnel

The key personnel who will be responsible for completion of the project, as well as other personnel involved in the project.



X. Evaluation

- How will we evaluate our efforts?
    - Track how many volunteers we have by having them give us their email and phone number and we send them an eventbrite ticket. www.Eventbrite.com
        - Exclusivity is marketable because if we make this seem like it is a limited personnel event, people may be more apt to participating
        - Event Brite will give you exactly the amount of people who have confirmed and canceled the date
- Feedback emails post-event
    - Receive feedback and seek volunteers for next year
    - Maybe have them be “elite” members for next year?
    - Survey Monkey
- Excel
    - Track trees, budget, dates, and times

XI. Endorsements

Provide the names and addresses of individuals and companies who the GTC plans to support and endorse the project.

- Grants
- PG&E, Santa Clara water district, State and Federal
- Association of arborists

- Corporate sponsorship
    - Cisco, Johnson/Johnson, Hotels, Tesla, Google, Apple, Service organizations, Churches, Association of Milpitas, Shappell, Lowes, Home Depot, Orchard Supply
    - Letter of solicitation and tax ID

XII. Next Steps

- The next step is the City of Milpitas Council approval to allow a Green Emissions Sub-Committee as a part of the Community Advisory Commission.

XIII. Future Ideas/Proposals

- Planting a community garden
    - Helps feed the needy for free, is green, allows better air quality, and can help people who are hungry.
- Solar Panels
    - Driving a city-wide effort for Solar Panels
- Recycling Day
    - Sponsor a day where uncommon items are recycled and picked up from residences
        - Electronics, Batteries, Toner, etc
- Community Flower Garden/Flower Walk
    - A beautiful trail or garden of flowers
        - Much like San Jose Japanese Gardens

XIV. Appendix

http://www.nber.org/papers/w14238.pdf?new_window=1

Table 2:

Annual Standardized Household CO_2 Emissions

MSA	Emissions from Driving (Lbs of CO2)	Emissions from Public Transportation (Lbs of CO2)	Emissions from Home Heating (Lbs of CO2)	Electricity (Megawatt Hrs)	NERC Power Plant Emissions Factor (Lbs of CO2 per Megawatt Hrs)	Carbon Dioxide Emissions Cost ($ per Year)	Standard Error ($ per Year)
San Diego, CA	24,774	689	5,994	7.18	1,007	1,148	14.87
San Francisco, CA	23,970	1,675	6,784	7.03	1,007	1,152	17.17
San Jose, CA	23,649	2,058	7,030	7.75	1,007	1,175	16.03
Providence, RI	22,562	1,273	12,965	7.35	1,185	1,177	13.24
Los Angeles, CA	23,553	1,062	6,439	8.43	1,007	1,188	17.91

America's Greenest Cities:

Portland, Oregon

Affordable and accessible, this city straddling the banks of the Willamette River has long made sustainable living a priority. More than 30 years ago, with other cities in a freeway-building frenzy, Portland broke ranks and tore down a six-lane expressway to make room for a waterfront park. Since then the city has set an urban growth boundary to protect 25 million acres of forest and farmland, started a solid-waste program that recycles more than half of the city's trash and erected more than 50 public buildings that meet tough standards set by the United States Green Building Council. One of the most bike-friendly cities in the U.S., Portland's public transportation, Portland's public transportation systems boasts a high rate of ridership. Add in one of the nation's largest city parks – the aptly named Forest Park has 74 miles of running, biking and hiking trails – and Portland's rep as the nation's greenest city makes sense.

Austin, Texas

Home to the first Whole Foods Market and more than 300 days of sunshine a year (and you thought this city was all about the music) Austin spreads out among 205 parks, 14 nature preserves, and 25 greenbelts. Talk about green. The city plans to meet 20 percent of its energy needs with renewable energy and energy efficiency by 2020. Factor in county laws protecting the region's natural watershed from development, a recycling center that dates back to 1970, a dozen outdoor farmer's markets, city buses that offer free rides on "high ozone" days and an innovative "pay-as-you-throw" trash collection program that rewards residents for being less wasteful and Austin easily earns a spot on the Green List.

Minneapolis, Minnesota

Named one of the top business districts in the nation for by the Environmental Protection Agency, Minneapolis is a commuter's paradise where more than 60 percent of downtown workers use public or alternative transportation to get to the office. Free parking for registered van and car pools, an extensive bike

path and bike lane system and employer-sponsored showers and locker rooms not only add endorphins but make a significant dent into auto-based air pollution. On the way to work, commuters thread their way among scores of lakes and parks and ponds and greenbelts and more than 200,000 trees. With great drinking water, active community organizations and the Minnesota State Department of Commerce nudging businesses and residents to hook solar systems up to the city's grid, it doesn't take Mary Tyler Moore tossing her beret into the air to let you know this is a great place to live.

Boulder, Colorado

Being green has been a way of life in this small Rocky Mountain city ever since prescient city planners started preserving parkland in 1898. Today, with more than 42,000 acres of pristine land cushioning the city from urban sprawl, Boulder is a place where hiking trails, rock-climbing areas, picnic spots and fishing holes are within reach of every resident. But there's more to this city than just a pretty face. It's a place where more than 90 percent of residents recycle, where new water meters are not allowed above certain elevation, thus protecting ridgelines and peaks, and where, when recent federal tax cuts gutted city budgets, residents voted themselves a third sales-tax hike to raise $51 million to buy and protect even more open land.

Burlington, Vermont

In this small city on Lake Champlain, community pride and responsibility drive the urge to be green. More than one-third of all energy used in the city comes from renewable resources, an impressive statistic in chilly New England. Burlington laws don't allow the use of pesticides on public parks, land or waterways. Challenged by their local leaders to come up with environmental priorities and solutions to existing problems, residents formed an extensive network of citizen-based groups that take on everything from environmental programs to clean up toxic sites to watchdog groups to monitor pollution in Lake Champlain. With local agriculture a mainstay of the region, schools are switching to locally- and organically-grown foods. The idea of sustainability is becoming part of the school curriculum so, as Burlington's children grow and take their places in the community – any community – they can take a greener way of thinking along with them.

Madison, Wisconsin

The first city in the U.S. to offer curbside recycling (and one of the few with a university course on ice cream making) Madison's 15,000 acres of lakes and 6,000 acres of parkland give it great appeal. Drawn by the natural beauty, residents seem determined to help preserve it. The recycling program gets a whopping 97 percent participation, with 265 tons of material – everything from broken washers to empty beer cans to grass clippings – collected each week. A year-round farmer's market (held indoors in the frigid winter months) draws vendors and buyers from throughout the fertile region. As a result, organic and local-grown foods are a priority. This bike-friendly city with over 100 miles of bike paths ranks high in air quality, no surprise in a place where there are three bikes for every car.

New York, New York

Surprise! Thanks to its storied (and widely used) public transportation, energy-efficient housing and good water quality, New York rates a place among the nation's green cities. Central Park makes it even greener. Considered a folly of epic proportions when its 843 swampy, muddy acres were set aside in the 1850s, Central Park is a wilderness within the urban core. More than 80 percent of NYC residents use public transportation, something that earns the city bragging rights. In fact, New Yorkers burn gasoline at the rate the U.S. did in the 1920s. The key to the city's low use of fossil fuels, pesticides and other energy sources is population density. Calculated by square foot, New York uses as much energy and produces as much solid waste as any city. Calculate by population, however, and the numbers shift. Per capita, New Yorkers use fewer resources and put less pressure on their surroundings than any other city of its size. So welcome to the Big Green Apple.

San Francisco, California
To the superlatives the City by the Bay has acquired over the decades – steepest, foggiest, most expensive – add greenest. With bus, subway and ferry services that reach throughout the Bay area, avid bikers and devoted car poolers, San Francisco has a good track record for getting people out of their cars. In fact, more than half the city's residents use public or alternative transportation to get to work. With Golden Gate Park, the newly-decommissioned Presidio, beaches, extensive bike paths and access to the Pacific and the Bay, the city has an abundance of recreational options. Prevailing winds from the water help keep pollution at bay. The city is also a leader in green building, with more than 20 building projects registered for official green certification. And city residents are willing to tax themselves. Voters said yes to allowing the city to sell $100 million in revenue bonds to support renewable energy.

Santa Monica, California
Just 12 years ago, the environmental future of this seaside city looked unimpressive. Thanks to an active city council, which wrote and enacted the Sustainable City Plan, Santa Monica has turned green. Three of every four of the city's public works vehicles run on alternative fuel, making it among the largest such fleets in the country. All public buildings use renewable energy. In the last 15 years, the city has cut greenhouse gas emissions by nearly 10 percent, a feat in car-crazy Southern California. City officials and residents have made the ongoing cleanup of the Santa Monica Bay a priority – an urban runoff facility catches 3.5 million gallons of water each week that would otherwise flow into the bay. Add in the miles of beaches, extensive curbside recycling, farmer's markets, community gardens, the city's nimble bus system and Santa Monica is clearly more than just another bathing beauty.

What's to like about Chicago? Open space, good transportation and a commitment to renewable and sustainable energy.

Chicago, Illinois
With open space, public transportation and a commitment to renewable and sustainable energy, Chicago has earned a spot on numerous 'greenest city' lists. The city has 42 green-certified building projects, with more to come. All of the city's nine museums and the Art Institute of Chicago have been converted to run partially on solar power. Close to one-third of all residents use public transportation to get to work. Among the city's energy goals, likely to be met, is buying 20 percent of its electricity from renewable energy sources this year. City officials have voted to give tax incentives to homeowners who invest in Chicago's many historic homes and retrofit them with energy efficient heating and cooling systems, as well as water-saving plumbing. Water quality on the city's lakefront is rated as excellent by the Natural Resources Defense Council, a happy detail for all the swimmers, boaters and sun bathers along the shore in the summer. And you thought it was all about Oprah.

http://www.realtor.com/home-finance/real-estate/general/top-greenest-cities-in-us.aspx?source=web