



TREEPEOPLE

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## **TreePeople Responds to Climate Change Threats by Launching Transformative San Fernando *Calles Verdes-Green Streets* Project!**

*This Community-Driven Project will Plant 750+ Trees and Retrofit Public Areas to Capture Precious Stormwater*

SAN FERNANDO, CA [January 24, 2019] — The time to act is now, and TreePeople will combat the mounting threats of climate change with the launch of San Fernando ***Calles Verdes (Green Streets)*** - a multi-benefit greening project that will engage thousands of community and youth members to transform San Fernando into a model City for climate resilience. At least 750 trees will be planted to shade sundrenched streets and absorb harmful greenhouse gasses. Streets and parking lots will be redesigned and constructed with innovative features that will capture precious stormwater to bolster water supplies and reduce polluted runoff.

“We are overhauling the way we think about infrastructure and public health given our new climate reality. Planting trees and protecting our groundwater needs to be central for economic revitalization and long-term resilience of our neighborhoods,” explained Cindy Montanez, TreePeople CEO and former Mayor of San Fernando.

Supported by the California State Coastal Conservancy, which is providing the funding from the Water Quality, Supply, and Infrastructure Improvement Act of 2014 (Proposition 1), they have committed more than \$1.2 million toward the project. The San Fernando *Calles Verdes* kickoff event will take place on **Saturday, January 26, 2019 at Pioneer Park in San Fernando, CA** at 8:30 AM PST. The kickoff will engage community members to plant trees at the park and to provide input on the project’s stormwater capture design features. In addition, more than 300 fruit trees will be distributed to event guests so that they can plant them at home.

The kickoff will also serve as a key moment to educate the public about the health and environmental threats that residents of San Fernando face due to climate change - such as extreme heat. Extreme heat is not just uncomfortable, it is life threatening! More Americans are

killed by extreme heat events than all other natural disasters combined. And climatologists have identified San Fernando as “ground zero” for urban heat island impact, meaning that it is one of the communities most at risk from increasing heat. The City already averages 54 extreme heat days (95 degrees or higher) annually, and that number is predicted to nearly double by mid-century if measures are not taken to reverse the trend. With shade trees having been found to reduce street temperatures by upwards of 15 degrees, San Fernando *Calles Verdes* will not just green the City, it will save lives.

Currently, San Fernando neighborhoods have less than 17% tree cover, which is less than half the average of higher-income communities in the Los Angeles region. As a result, San Fernando residents experience severe environmental health challenges, including high rates of respiratory illnesses, obesity, and cancer. San Fernando *Calles Verdes* will significantly expand tree canopy in vulnerable neighborhoods, growing the City’s tree inventory by more than 10%. TreePeople will partner with community volunteers to plant climate-appropriate trees throughout the City with a focus on streets where kids walk to school, elderly visit senior centers, and families go to parks and shopping areas.

“The people in our hometown are eager to green San Fernando,” said Joel Fajardo, Mayor of San Fernando. “Trees can unite and empower people of all ages to become part of the solution to improve the quality of life in San Fernando and protect our community against the real threats of pollution and our new climate reality.”

Therefore, community involvement is essential to the success of San Fernando *Calles Verdes*. Residents will be trained and supported in long-term tree care to ensure a thriving urban forest for years to come. TreePeople will also partner with community members to finalize designs and construction of nature-based solutions that capture and infiltrate stormwater. Solutions include vegetated curb extensions, and parkway and parking lot swales. Stormwater features will be placed and designed to optimize water capture and to reduce flooding at key pedestrian corridors.

Unlike most cities in Los Angeles County, San Fernando is located over a functioning groundwater aquifer, which means that infiltrating stormwater not only reduces polluted runoff to local waterways, but also adds to the region’s water supply, building a sustainable and secure local water source for years to come. Based on preliminary design plans, San Fernando *Calles Verdes* will capture more than 30 million gallons of stormwater each year, and the trees planted by *Calles Verdes* will remove an estimated 3 million pounds of greenhouse gases and other harmful pollutants from the air, helping to improve air quality and combat climate change.

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### **About TreePeople**

TreePeople unites the power of trees, people, and nature-based solutions to grow more climate-resilient and water-secure communities as the region faces extreme weather, historic drought and a hotter, drier future. The organization inspires, engages, and supports people to take personal responsibility for the urban environment, facilitates collaboration among public

agencies and business, and promotes leadership in grassroots volunteers, youth and communities. In this way, TreePeople seeks to build a powerful and diverse coalition to grow a greener, healthier and more water-secure Los Angeles for present and future generations.

### **About Coastal Conservancy**

The Coastal Conservancy is a California state agency, established in 1976, to protect and improve natural lands and waterways, to help people get to and enjoy the outdoors, and to sustain local economies along California's coast. It acts with others to protect and restore, and increase public access to California's coast, ocean, coastal watersheds, and the San Francisco Bay Area. Its vision is of a beautiful, restored, and accessible coast for current and future generations of Californians.

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