

Response to Mountain View Whisman School District  
Request for Proposals (RFP)  
Tree Planting and Care Program for School Sites



Respectfully Submitted by Canopy



January 17, 2025

## **Proposal Requirements**

### **1. Organizational Information:**

#### **a. Description of the organization, including relevant experience in urban forestry, tree planting, and community engagement.**

Canopy is a nonprofit organization dedicated to growing urban tree canopies in Midpeninsula communities where people need them most. Guided by a mission to create greener, healthier, and more equitable neighborhoods, Canopy plants and cares for trees while engaging and educating the community about the critical role urban forests play in our environment and well-being.

With over 25 years of experience, Canopy has developed a proven track record in urban forestry, tree planting, and community engagement and education. To date, Canopy has planted and cared for several thousand trees throughout our region, including school campuses, parks, and city streets across Palo Alto, East Palo Alto, Menlo Park, North Fair Oaks and Mountain View. By working in close partnership with local municipalities, school districts, and grassroots organizations, Canopy ensures its projects are tailored to community needs and achieve long-term impact.

#### **Urban Forestry Expertise**

Canopy is recognized for its rigorous approach to tree planting and care, ensuring high survival rates and long-term health of the urban forest. Recent initiatives include planting over 1,000 trees in East Palo Alto neighborhoods and schools as part of the "Healthy Trees, Healthy Kids" program, with additional projects underway to plant another 300 trees in the Ravenswood City School District.

#### **Community Tree Planting**

Canopy's tree planting events are designed to educate and empower the community. Volunteers of all ages learn proper planting techniques through hands-on demonstrations, fostering stewardship and connection to the local environment.

#### **Community Engagement and Education**

Canopy integrates education into all its programs. Its youth engagement initiatives inspire the next generation of environmental stewards, while workshops, events, and public campaigns—like the "Is Your Tree Thirsty?" water conservation effort—build awareness about tree care and the importance of urban forests.

Canopy has delivered over 1,000 PreK-12 environmental education lessons to date, including over 200 in Mountain View Whisman School District. Canopy's

lessons are NGSS-aligned, culturally relevant opportunities for students to see themselves as arborists, environmental leaders, and stewards of their urban forests. Canopy's highly trained education team is led by Education Director Ally Bell, who has 15 years of experience as an educator, including nine in the public school classroom, and Environmental Educator Tania Cooley, an experienced bilingual environmental educator with a B.S. in Ecology and Evolutionary Biology from the University of California - Santa Cruz. She is currently pursuing her Environmental Educator Certification through the Association for Environmental and Outdoor Education. In the 2024-2025 school year, teachers in MVWSD shared the following about their experiences:

- *"My students truly loved their Canopy lessons. I'm so impressed with their ability to articulate how trees adapt to various conditions. This was especially evident at the end of the lesson when they had a few minutes to make up their own skits. Without any pre-written guidance, the groups came up with creative scenarios involving trees that had to adapt to weather changes or other challenges. They had so much fun!"*
- *"Ms. Tania and Mr. Matthew are excellent teachers. They have great classroom management skills, are very receptive to feedback, and clearly love working with kids. I was so happy to have them in my STEAM classroom!"*
- *"Our kindergartens discovered the beauty of fall leaves with magnifiers!!"*

### **Core Strategies and Values**

Canopy's work is guided by four key strategies:

- **Engage:** Partnering with residents, volunteers, and institutions to plant and care for trees.
- **Educate:** Creating life-long environmental stewards through educational programs.
- **Steward:** Maintaining rigorous tree care practices to ensure longevity.
- **Advocate:** Promoting policies and funding to support urban forests.

### **Notable Programs and Initiatives**

- **Tree Planting:** From eco-schoolyards in Mountain View to neighborhood greening projects in East Palo Alto, Canopy's planting efforts target areas where trees can provide the greatest impact.
- **Young Tree Care:** Programs like the "Young Tree Care Survey" engage volunteers to monitor tree health and provide essential maintenance.
- **Youth Programs:** Canopy's Teen Urban Foresters program provides hands-on experience and mentorship, empowering local youth to become leaders in environmental stewardship.

- **Urban Forest Advocacy:** Collaborating with public and private entities, Canopy advocates for policies that protect and grow urban forests.

### **Impact**

Canopy's work has transformed landscapes, improved community health, and built resilience against climate change in Midpeninsula communities. Whether planting trees, maintaining them, or educating residents about their care, Canopy's efforts foster sustainability, equity, and a sense of community.

Through its innovative programs and dedication to urban forestry, Canopy ensures that every resident has the opportunity to walk, play, and thrive under the shade of healthy trees.

### **b. Resumes of key personnel, including certified arborists.**

Please find the resumes for the personnel listed below in this folder:

#### **Canopy Key Staff Resumes**

- i. Aubrey Knier, Tree Programs Manager
- ii. Evany Wang, Community Forestry Coordinator
- iii. Allison Bell, Education Director
- iv. Tania Cooley, Environmental Educator
- v. Gabrielle Trudeau, Tree Care Coordinator; ISA-Certified arborist
- vi. Jean-Paul Renaud, Executive Director

## **2. Technical Approach:**

### **a. Detailed plan for tree selection, planting, and care.**

Canopy has over 20 years of experience planting trees on school campuses and dozens of expert staff and volunteer arborists in its network to deliver high-quality, engaging plantings to MVWSD's campuses. Moreover, Canopy proudly holds itself to the most rigorous, up-to-date International Society of Arboriculture (ISA) technical standards when planting trees to ensure their longevity and success. A dedicated Mountain View Whisman School District Community Forestry Coordinator (MVWSD CFC) would be added to the Canopy team and be solely responsible for ensuring that every aspect of the tree planting and care programs are carried out with care and quality.

We believe that the process of planting a tree starts long before the tree is put in the ground. From the initial site visit, the MVWSD CFC will thoroughly assess the site for both vertical and horizontal spacing, usability, environmental conditions, shade potential, and other considerations such as particulate matter concentrations or allergens. This is done in partnership with the District, City of Mountain View, and the school's community of administration, teachers, parents,



and students to ensure that the right trees for the right place are selected to maximize their benefits to the campus. Additionally, species are recommended with considerations including climate resilience, water use, root damage potential, local ecology, aesthetics, cultural significance, and demonstrations of tree biology and phenology to complement school lessons. The tree species and location recommendations are then drafted on a sophisticated tree mapping software called TreePlotter and a visual planting plan is made accessible to the City and MVWSD for approval. This is a living plan that often goes through multiple iterations as feedback is solicited and implemented. For each school, a hybrid community listening session will be conducted so that members of the community can provide feedback before the plan is finalized via online or in-person. Additionally, the MVWSD CFC will clear the planting locations for conflicting underground utilities and work directly with Canopy's partners at Google's Gilroy-based nursery to procure free California native trees and coordinate deliveries to the school campuses.

Canopy's tried and true planting methods have proven both successful from an arboricultural and volunteer engagement standpoint. Notable parts of our process include working the root ball of each tree to remove significant wrapping or crossing roots and deeply hand-watering trees immediately after they have been planted. These steps ensure that the root system of the tree develops to be stable and deep, preventing uplifting roots that damage hardscapes and are unstable in high winds and heavy rain. Moreover, the MVWSD CFC will be responsible for staying in constant contact with City of Mountain View partners to coordinate irrigation installations and ensure that the trees are being adequately watered in alignment with local water management practices. In the unfortunate event that a tree is unsuccessful within three years after planting, Canopy will ensure that the tree is replaced and replanted in a timely manner.

Education is deeply woven into our planting process. Volunteers from all abilities and experience levels are warmly welcomed and accommodated. Participants will have hands-on opportunities to be involved in each step of the planting process (safety permitting), and will receive thorough explanations and on-site training from our seasoned Canopy volunteer planting leaders and staff.

After the trees have been planted, their time with Canopy has really just begun. Canopy provides three years of post-planting tree care as these vital establishment years determine the health, resiliency, structure, and overall success of the tree in its maturity. Tree care fieldwork includes root check ups, stake and strap removals and adjustments, pruning, mulching, and overall health assessments for pests and diseases. These arboricultural activities will be accomplished by the dedicated MVWSD CFC both independently and alongside volunteers. Over the 3-year tree care window, each campus will have 1-3

volunteer tree care workdays where the school community has the opportunity to re-engage with the trees they planted and learn new tree care techniques.

In addition to newly-planted trees, the entire urban forest of each MVWSD campus will be meticulously plotted, tracked, and assessed on TreePlotter throughout the 5-year term of this project. At its conclusion, a District-wide tree inventory will be concluded to assess the health and make management recommendations for MVWSD's collective urban forest.

**b. Description of strategies for engaging the school community and broader community, delivering educational programs, and managing feedback.**

Canopy proposes a robust strategy for engagement, education, and feedback management. First, Canopy will engage the school and broader community through regular community plantings, in which volunteers of all ages are invited to work together with Canopy staff to plant young trees on school campuses. These events are an opportunity for the community to invest in their local schools, connect with each other, and learn best practices for tree planting and care. In addition, they build on Canopy's in-classroom environmental education lessons to create school-home connections and inspire families to enjoy and care for their urban forests.

A dedicated Mountain View Whisman Environmental Educator (EE) will be added to the Canopy team deliver educational programs, including up to 70 NGSS-aligned environmental education lessons for PreK - 5th grade classes per school year, one after-school environmental leadership program for middle school students, up to 10 "Planting Trees is Fun" lessons, and nature-based programming through MVWSD's summer ELOP program. In order to support the ongoing integration of environmental education in the classroom, each class receiving Canopy lessons will have the opportunity to receive nature-based educational materials tailored to the grade level and teachers' needs. Such materials could include tree-related books, a tree puppet, or an indoor potted tree. In addition, each school campus will receive a garden shed stocked with supplies to support students in caring for the young trees through water, weeding, and mulching.

Canopy's environmental education lessons use hands-on, culturally relevant student-centered activities to build a strong sense of belonging in urban nature and in STEAM fields. Each lesson incorporates the trees on the school's campus, including trees that the students themselves have helped plant and care for. Grade 1 - 4 lessons also incorporate age-appropriate climate topics in alignment with A.B. 285.



Additionally, Canopy's special "Planting Trees is Fun" lessons bring classrooms directly into the tree planting process through 90 minute experiences that include hands-on learning and a guided on-campus planting.

Finally, Canopy would offer an environmental leadership program for middle school students modeled off of its existing "Junior Forester Leader" program. This program would invite students to care for the trees on their campus, advocate for their urban forest, and become environmental educators in their own right. If feasible, Canopy would partner with both middle and elementary schools to create opportunities for middle school students to mentor elementary school students in environmental education.

To manage feedback, Canopy provides teachers with an electronic, emailed evaluation to complete after each lesson. Canopy's Environmental Educator and Education Director review evaluations at least quarterly, seeking areas to maintain and improve. In addition, Canopy's Environmental Educator solicits informal feedback and input before, during, and after lessons from teachers. MVWSD teachers have been invaluable partners in shaping Canopy's lessons through their insights.


### **3. Timeline:**

#### **a. Proposed schedule for planting, maintenance activities, and educational events.**

- i. See the attached timelines for our proposed schedule of planting, tree care, and educational programming for each campus as well as district-wide across the 5-year term of this project.
  - 1.  Proposed Individual Campus Timeline.jpg
  - 2.  Proposed District-wide 5-year Project Timeline.jpg

### **4. Budget:**

#### **a. Comprehensive budget, including costs for tree procurement, labor, maintenance, watering, and program delivery.**

- i. See attached proposed budget
  - 1.  Proposed MVWSD 5-year Canopy Budget.pdf

### **5. References:**

#### **a. Contact information for at least three previous clients with similar projects.**

- i. City of Mountain View
  - 1. Russell Hanson  
Urban Forester

City of Mountain View  
Phone: 650-903-6832  
Email: Russell.Hansen@mountainview.gov

- ii. City of Palo Alto
  - 1. Peter Gollinger  
Urban Forester  
City of Palo Alto  
Phone: 650 496-6946  
Email: Peter.Gollinger@cityofpaloalto.org
- iii. Ravenswood City School District (via CAL FIRE Green Schoolyards grant)
  - 1. William Eger  
Assistant Superintendent, Finance and Operations  
Ravenswood City School District  
Phone: 650-329-2800 x101  
Email: weger@ravenswoodschools.org
- iv. All Five Early Childhood Center
  - 1. Karen Pace  
Strategic Projects Manager  
All Five  
Phone: 650-504-1928  
Email: kcpace3@gmail.com

## **6. Professional Service Agreement**

- a. **The proposer should agree to utilize the District's Professional Service Agreement attached. If there are portions they wish to change they must be submitted in writing.**
  - i. Canopy agrees to utilize the District's Professional Service Agreement as presented