

## Going green with Los Angeles' first city forest officer

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Los Angeles is about to get a whole lot greener. Last week, Mayor Eric Garcetti doubled down on climate promises by appointing Rachel Malarich to a newly created position: city forest officer.

The main goal of this position is to oversee the growth of Los Angeles' urban forest and plant 90,000 trees by 2021. Malarich will also work to bring together all of the departments that manage some aspect of the city's urban forest, including the Department of Recreation and Parks, the Urban Forestry Division of the Bureau of Street Services and the Department of Water and Power.

"The trees don't know which jurisdiction they're in, they're all part of the same urban forest. We're looking at the broader vision and how to manage that forest," Malarich said.

In the 1990s, a task force identified the need to bring these groups together in a unified urban forestry effort. It advanced within the past year as a group of stakeholders received funding to advance an urban forestry plan.

Malarich specifically began her work in urban forestry in response to a 2008 study that looked at Los Angeles' tree canopy and how there was a disparity in canopy coverage across different communities. "I was hired by one of the nonprofits to work in one of those communities with tremendously low canopy coverage... That's where my work started," she said.

Smart Cities Dive spoke with Malarich, who will step into the new position at the end of this month, about the benefits and challenges of expanding Los Angeles' tree canopy.

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