

Urban Forest Task Force Applicant

Mr. Thomas Cleys

Application Date: 05/06/21

INTERESTS AND EXPERIENCE

Current or prior service on city boards/commissions:

I am a founding member of the Urban Forest Task Force

Community activities:

Prior VP of Friends of Sunset Park

Founding Board member of the Santa Monica Conservancy, first president of that organization and now current president. Have also served as it's treasurer for for 18 years.

Qualifications, experience, education, and technical or professional requirements:

Prior terms on the Task Force. I have had a life long interest in gardening and trees. I maintain the garden at my home. I planted that garden 15 years ago with a design by Laura Saltzman and it includes a CA sycamore, 6 ginkgos, Chinese magnolia, variegated Skyflower and a Melaleuca nesophila. The garden has been on several garden tours. My educational background includes a BS in Mathematics from Loyola University of Chicago, and a joint Master of Business Administration and Master of Real Estate Development from the University of Southern California.

Goals:

A critical matter that remains is evaluation of and hopefully the implementation of a private tree ordinance. We are losing significant tree canopy in some single family neighborhoods. I was a member of the ad hoc committee researching a private tree ordinance until the pandemic shut down the activities of that committee and the Task Force. I very much would like to continue that work. My role on that committee has been the sole non-landscape industry or staff person on that committee. My role is to represent the community using my advocacy and political experience working in the City with other organizations like Friends of Sunset Park and the Santa Monica Conservancy. I also bring to the Ad Hoc committee, along with Grace Phillips, my experience being on the Task Force since inception.

Today, the only current way to protect trees of significance on private property is the landmarks ordinance and that is generally not the right tool. We need to craft a private tree ordinance that is not over reaching, but protect native trees of significance. This has been a challenge for the Task Force since inception and I want to be part of implementing such an ordinance in a final additional term on the Task Force.

Vision:

With the assistance of wonderful staff, Santa Monica has one of the leading urban forest master plans in the Country. We have implemented thoughtful maintenance protocol. So we have become a 'go to' example of how to grow and manage a public tree program. I want to continue that reputation through

thoughtful participation on the Task Force. Our urban forest impacts our lives on a daily basis. It provides visual pleasure, cools our neighborhoods and sequesters carbon. All of these reasons are why our urban forest is critical to our well being.

Personal Qualities:

I am Vice Chair of the Task Force and have been quite effective when challenging appeals have been made by the community. I have a reputation for listening to appellants, making well thought through recommendations, and treating citizens with respect regardless of whether our recommendations support the appellants. I have worked for years effectively on the Board of Friends of Sunset Park and the Santa Monica Conservancy. On Friends, I lead the original effort to limit the monster mansions and worked to get the support of the community for historic preservation. With the Conservancy, I am now President of the Board and am working to expand the organization's influence in the community and make it sustainable for decades to come. I have remained on the Executive Committee since inception and have provided fiscal leadership for the organization. None of these accomplishments would have come about if I had not exhibited leadership, flexibility, and an ability to work well with others.

Will you be able to commit the necessary time to perform your duties if appointed to the board?

yes

How did you learn about the vacancy in this board or commission? (select all that apply)

Word of Mouth- Council or Board/Commission member, City Staff, neighborhood groups, etc.

BUSINESS INFORMATION

Occupation: retired

Business name:

Business address: None. Retired.

Business phone: na