

THE RIGHT TREE-TMENT...
FOR THE AUDIENCE AND THE ISSUE



Compared with neighboring cities, Oakland has noticeably fewer tree-lined streets. This irony, in a city named for trees, resulted from policy decisions in the 1950s limiting tree-planting. In 1981, the city adopted a new Street Tree Plan: *GreenStreets*, and engaged Fern Tiger Associates to help residents take action on the plan.

While the city brought in arborists who developed an award-winning plan for appropriate tree options and had worked hard to sell the ecological, aesthetic, and social value of trees, it continued to stumble in efforts to “regreen” Oakland, as residents found it difficult to make tree selections. FTA observed dozens of neighborhood meetings to hear common questions about the plan. Many residents who had never before planted trees couldn’t conceive of the changing size of a tree and how that might impact things like looking out their second-floor window.

Working closely with experts, FTA designed a comprehensive book with information about selecting tree species appropriate for a particular neighborhood or street, and about planting, trimming, and managing them. To address residents’ key questions, information and diagrams of each of the more than 100 trees were included, depicting each tree graphically at varying stages in its growth and in proximity to one- and two-story homes, so that residents could visualize each tree type at the time of delivery and planting, as well as 20 years later.

Part of the challenge in selling GreenStreets was that neighbors needed to decide together what tree they wanted to plant on their street. Neighborhood groups held meetings with the city and referred repeatedly to their “GreenStreets Kit,” especially the reference pages, before coming to a consensus about the official tree for their block.



GREENSTREETS, Oakland’s citywide program to encourage residents to plant street trees in neighborhoods and on major thoroughfares, grew out of the 1981 Street Tree Plan for Oakland.