

Chapter Nine: Careers in Urban Greening





The Field of Urban Greening

“The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics estimates that the need for urban foresters will grow by 5% over the next 10 years.”

– Vibrant Cities Lab

It's now beyond clear that we urgently need to adapt to climate change's existing and future impacts. With this realization has come the rise of a climate adaptation movement and industry dedicated to creating a more climate-resilient future. By becoming a Tree Ambassador, learning about urban greening, and sharing this information with your communities, you have helped advance the mission of growing a resilient future for Los Angeles, and we hope you're interested in continuing down this path.

Now that the official program is nearing its end, we want to take this chapter to introduce the broader scope of the urban greening field, how you may find jobs in this field, and of course, talk about ways you can continue your urban greening projects and goals beyond this program. We will cover the topics of the urban greening career sector, hold a brief section on the job application process, and discuss the next steps for the Tree Ambassadors program.



Many are now recognizing the increasing importance of urban greening within green careers. In 2020, the City of Los Angeles pledged to plant 90,000 trees within one year and increase tree canopy in the areas of greatest need by 2028. As a Tree Ambassador, you have experienced what it's like to work in tree planting and care, tree distribution, and community outreach. You've also gotten a feel for the many skill sets needed to achieve ambitious urban greening goals in a city like Los Angeles – including data collection, site inspection and selection, community engagement, research, and policy intervention.

There are many positions within the broad field of urban forestry, and those positions span many sectors, including commercial tree care companies, the private sector, government agencies, utility companies, academia, nonprofit organizations, and more.



Career Next Steps

These skills can apply to similar positions in urban forestry that revolve around trees or community outreach. Some of the potential career pathways (but not limited to) for Tree Ambassadors are:

- Outreach Coordinator
- Tree Care Specialist
- Community Advocate
- Urban Forester (Planner, Manager, Technician)

Your work connections can expand your professional network and open doors to other opportunities. Still, the ability to collaborate with others is one that many companies look for and is beneficial for an individual's personal and professional development. Working as a team helps establish a good work environment and co-worker relationships. Working with others often opens opportunities to learn more from them and expand your skill set as you're exposed to their distinct skill sets. Maintaining these good relationships with co-workers and supervisors can be a way to build your list of references who have positive things to say about you as an employee when applying for future jobs.

Some jobs in urban greening do require additional certifications. If you're curious about any certifications you'll need for a specific role, be sure to ask the professionals at our career panels or contact your program host site for more information.

Potential Positions

Now that you have reflected on what you have done - let's start imagining how to move forward. Careers in the environmental sector can be fairly challenging to find, but there are a couple of techniques to help land you your next position. This chapter will detail common job positions within the field, navigate professional networking, and give insight into the hiring process.

Common Terms	
Non-Governmental Organization (NGO)	A non-profit organization that operates independently of any level of government, typically with the purpose of addressing a social or political issue.
Non-Profit	A tax-exempt organization whose mission is to serve the public good.
Not For Profit	Not-for-profit organizations do not earn profits for their owners. Instead, funds are used to pursue the organization's objectives and keeping it running.
Academia	The sector concerned with the pursuit of research, education, and scholarship. Often comprise of colleges and universities.
Governmental	Governmental positions exist at three different levels: local (city/county), state, and federal. Each sectors have positions which maintain or work for their respective level of government.

Arborist

Do you enjoy being outside and working with your hands? Arborists help physically maintain the urban forest through planting, pruning, and removing trees. These people are absolute tree experts trained in tree species identification and tree health.

Skills and Qualifications

- Tree Species Identification
- Tree Planting, Pruning, and Removal
- Integrated Pest Management Skills
- International Society of Arboriculture (ISA) Certificate

Places of Interest

- Koreatown Youth Community Center (KYCC)
- North East Trees
- TreePeople
- Davey Tree

Community Organizer

A community organizer networks with and mobilizes a community to support a cause. As a Tree Ambassador, you already have experience in this position! A career in this field may involve program development to have positive social impacts.

Skills and Qualifications

- Local Knowledge
- Grassroots Organizing
- Negotiation Problem Solving
- Bilingual (Spanish, Korean, Mandarin, etc.)

Places of Interest

- Climate Action Lab
- LA 2050
- Community Nature Connection
- Color Compton

Environmental Consultant

Environmental consultants combine scientific knowledge, familiarity with environmental regulations, and technical expertise to conduct environmental assessments. Environmental assessments identify the risks of an activity's land, water, and air contamination.

Skills and Qualifications

- California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Certificate
- Knowledge of Environmental Law and Regulations
- Data Analysis

Urban Ecologist

Urban ecologists are environmental scientists who have a background in environmental science. The field of ecology examines the relationships of organisms to one another and their physical surroundings. In an urban environment, these relationships include you and your neighborhood!

Skills and Qualifications

- College Degree in Biology, Environmental Science, Ecology, or Related Field
- Field Research Experience
- Knowledge of Urban Ecosystems

Places of Interest

- City of Los Angeles
- Universities and Colleges

Environmental Policy Analyst

Are you interested in the legal/governmental side of the environment? Then environmental policy may be the right field for you! Policy analysts identify current or impending problems and create or evaluate proposed solutions.

Skills and Qualifications

- Degree in Public Policy or Related Field
- Knowledge of Environmental Policies
- Ability to Project Policy Impacts

Places of Interest

- Climate Action Lab
- LA 2050
- Community Nature Connection
- Color Compton

Researcher

Research comes in all shapes and sizes and can be done in multiple different ways. Within the field of urban greening, we have a mixture of quantitative and qualitative. Areas of interest include environmental justice, climate change, urban planning, economics, public health, social, and work.

Skills and Qualifications

- Degree in related field
- Natural Curiosity
- Data Analysis

Places of Interest

- Universities and Colleges
- National Park Service
- Los Angeles County
- Los Angeles Recreation and Parks



Professional Networking

One perk of participating in the Tree Ambassador program is that you've had the opportunity to meet so many people from across the city! The connections and personal relationships that you have built with guest speakers, program partners, and community leaders will help open doors for future employment opportunities. In the professional world, these relationships are called networks. These people are trained experts with multiple years of experience in urban greening and environmental sectors. They may have some insight into how to position yourself for upcoming job openings. Try reaching out to a project partner, a guest speaker, or anyone else you have in mind to set up an informational interview.



Informational Interviews

Informational interviews are informal conversations with someone working in an area of interest to you. During these conversations, you may learn how the individual came to be in their current position, aspects of their job they enjoy, advice they wish they had heard before entering the job market, or they might even know of an upcoming job opening!

Informational Interviews are helpful for:

- Increasing network contacts
- Preparing for future job interviews
- Learning steps to pursue a potential career
- Recognizing your strengths and weaknesses for a possible role
- Learning how to research and screen careers, positions, and employers

Consider asking someone you already know or someone who might have other connections to someone in your field of interest, such as friends, family, professors, mentors, or supervisors. Other resources you can use are alumni or LinkedIn. Then, request an informational interview by email or LinkedIn. The formatting should be brief, friendly, and professional.

- Include a brief introduction of who you are and where you work/study
- Include in how you came to find them or who referred them to you
- Be clear about this being an informational interview and that you're seeking advice
- Acknowledge the value of their time and expertise
- Ask if they have time to schedule a 15-20 minute meeting
- Express your gratitude and provide your contact information

How to follow up:

After the informational interview, follow up with a 'thank you' email to thank them for their time and knowledge. If it isn't a bother and they're willing to hear back from you, you can follow up with them after some time about any successes you've had since the interview, such as getting a job offer or pursuing a higher education.

EXAMPLE INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

- What is your job like?
- What do you do on a typical day?
- What are your duties/responsibilities of your job?
- What kind of problems do you deal with?
- What percentage of your time is spent doing what?
How does a person progress in this field? What is a typical career path in this field or organization?
- What is the most challenging aspect of this field?
- What is the best way to enter this field? What are the needed qualifications?
- How did this type of work interest you and how did you get started?
- What jobs and experiences have led you to your current position?
- Do you have any advice for someone interested in this field?
- Are there any written materials I should read?
- Which organizations will help me learn more about this field?
- What do you hope to see for the future in this field?



Continuing Your Job Search

As you continue your job search, take advantage of all the resources available to you. In addition to informational interviews, closely follow online job boards. Job boards are websites used by employers to advertise job openings. You can use them to search for specific locations, employment types, and career fields. Some job boards may be the only place a job is advertised. For example, federal positions are only available via the USA Jobs website. These websites, platforms, and job boards can be found via a simple Google search! Also, if you have a specific company you're interested in working for, check for job openings on their websites.

1 Conservation Job Board

Online job boards showcase employment opportunities in ecology, wildlife, forestry, marine biology, environmental education, and other related fields. Be sure to filter listings by location!

2 Green Job Search

Online job boards with positions available by category - climate change, conservation, ecology, energy efficiency, farming, sustainability, and naturalist positions across the united states are posted on this board. It also gives information for upcoming job fairs!

3 Government Jobs - LA City & LA County

Are you looking to work for local government? The website "Government Jobs" helps you find and apply for positions in the City of Los Angeles and Los Angeles County. You'll need to make an internal profile and application to apply for jobs. Apply at tinyurl.com/dbc7yvf6 for City of LA and tinyurl.com/maep97vt for LA County.

4 CalCareers and USA Jobs

CalCareers will help you find positions at the state level, while USA Jobs has positions at the federal level. Each website has its profile, resume, and application requirements and formats.

5 LinkedIn and Indeed

Social media professional marketing networking site. Here you can connect with people in your field of interest and find available positions. LinkedIn can be an excellent way to see how others in your field have navigated their professional careers.

Academic Opportunities

As you may notice during your job search, many positions require certain educational degrees or years of experience in the field. This can often create barriers for first-generation, low-income, and marginalized communities to enter the workforce. While we may have yet to find the solution to this barrier, we have some tips and tricks to help you navigate academic programs while saving you some cash!

Associate's Degree

Associate's are affordable two-year academic degrees often completed between high school and undergrad.

Programs of Interest:

- Santa Monica College (SMC): Sustainability Systems & Technology
- SMC: Environmental Studies
- SMC: Recycling and Resource Management

Bachelor's Degree

Bachelor's are undergraduate degrees that typically take four years to complete. While earning your degree, you may major and minor in specific academic fields.

Programs of Interest:

- **CSULA:** Geography
- **CSUN:** Urban Studies and Planning & Environmental Science
- **CSULA:**
- **CSULB:** Biological Sciences
- **Occidental College:** Urban Environmental Policy
- **UCLA:** Environmental Science
- **USC:** Environmental Science and Health & Environmental Studies

Liscenses & Certificates

Certificates come at all different education levels: pre-undergraduate, undergraduate, and graduate. They show your specialization in a topic of interest. Each SMC associate degree is available as a certificate.

Programs of Interest:

- International Society of Arboriculture (ISA) Certificate
- California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Certificate
- UCLA: Leaders in Sustainability Certificate
- GIS Certificates

Graduate Degrees

While undergraduate degrees have become somewhat standard within our field – graduate degrees often train students in specialized topics. Adding a graduate degree to your resume can help you secure a pay bump at your new job. Secure a fellowship, teaching, or research position to help cover tuition!

Program of Interest:

- **CSULB:** Master of Science in Sustainability Management and Policy
- **UCLA:** Masters of Urban Planning



Building Your Application

Once you have found the perfect next step in your career, it's time to gather the materials for your application: cover letter, resume, references, and potentially more, depending upon the position. This may seem common sense, but job seekers often make a few significant mistakes that might disqualify them from consideration in a competitive pool of applicants. Let's go over the basics...

1

Cover Letter

A cover letter is a business letter that accompanies a resumé and serves as an introduction of you to potential employers. A cover letter is your opportunity to combine your work experience and career goals to tell the employer why you are the perfect fit for the position! Here are some prompts to help you write a cover letter.

- Why do you want to work in this position and with the company you are applying for?
- What experiences have prepared you for this position?
- What skills and knowledge do you bring to the table for this position?
- What would the impact of securing this position have on your career goals?

2

Resumé

Resumé are brief yet thorough descriptions of positions you have held and what you have accomplished within these positions. Unlike a cover letter, a resumé needs to be concise yet comprehensive. Use action words to describe accomplishments rather than highlighting previous job duties. Tailor your resumé to highlight your skills, achievements, and work history relevant to the position you are applying to. Make sure your resumé is well-written and aesthetically pleasing! Many recruiters may disqualify your application if your resumé has some glaring typos, is disorganized, or is even too long!

3

References

Applying to jobs is a social game - your relations are your allies! Most employers will want a second opinion on whether you're a good fit for the position you're applying for. References are a good way for them to do so. Ask a boss, a volunteer manager, or a professor with whom you worked closely and who you are in good relations with if they are willing to be one of your references. After receiving approval, help prepare your references by telling them why you are applying to your position and why you are a good fit. Be sure to follow up with a gracious thank you note once the application process has been completed!

4

Interviews

If the employer likes what they see in your cover letter, resumé, and references convincing, they will contact you to schedule an interview. Congrats! Interviewing can be pretty anxiety-inducing for many people. If you start to get nervous, remember it's human to be anxious - just try not to let it consume you! Here are some tips and tricks to work off the nerves and prepare for your interview:

- Brainstorm potential questions the employer may ask during the interview.
- Ask a friend or family member to conduct a practice interview with you. Make sure they ask you some curveball questions to simulate an actual interview.
- Come prepared with a list of questions you want to ask the interviewer. Try to get an impression of how they enjoy their work or if there are any unlisted job expectations.
- If you mess up on an answer or trip over your words don't fixate on your mistake! Mistakes happen and are expected.

Resumé Do's & Don't's

Practicing Conversations

As we stated before, resumé's are an employer's first impression of who you are! When writing your resumé, make sure to edit it to make it concise and that there are no errors. Ask your friends and family to review it and edit where they see fit. Here are a couple of do's and a couple don't's for your resumé.

- Highlight your most relevant experiences.
- Tailor your resumé to each job you are applying for!
- Use powerful action words to describe what you accomplished within your position.
- Include your contact information! Email, phone number, and city.
- Keep your descriptions concise.
- Design your resumé to mirror the company's energy - traditional companies will likely want traditional resumé's while smaller, more creative organizations may appreciate a creative one.
- Create a master resumé you can return to overtime.
- Use templates to inspire your format.
- Take your time with your "relevant work experience." Focus on transferable skills, related side projects, and relevant coursework.
- Do not mass disperse the same resumé to multiple positions.
- Do not use clichés or negative phrases or highlight mundane tasks.
- Do not include unnecessary personal information such as address and hobbies.
- Don't try to fit every job responsibility or position held onto your resumé.
- Remember to spell check.
- Do not send it as a Word document - PDFs will preserve your format.
- Do not exceed two pages for your resumé (preferably keep it down to one page).

Sample Resumé

Below we provide a sample for what a resume could look like. Take what is helpful from the example and leave what isn't.

Contact Info

Include section at the

top for your contact information

Education

If you were recently a student you may want to include an education section! But if you've been out a school for a bit, feel free to leave this out or put education towards the bottom of the page

Length

Resumes should be max 1 page unless directed otherwise

Category Names

Categorize jobs in a way that place your most relevant experiences at the top! Other potential categories are "Leadership Experience", etc.)

Job Order

Within each category jobs should be listed from your most recent jobs at the top.

Jane Doe

City of residence, zip code | your_email@gmail.com
123-456-7890 | Any additional contact information/websites

EDUCATION

Name of school, City of the school, State Graduation Year
• What you studied or the name of your program
• Relevant courses: Course name 1, Course name 2, and Course name 3

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Position Name, *Company/Group Name*, City, State Date start - Present
• Bullet point #1 describing your responsibilities.
• Bullet point #2 describing your responsibilities.
• Bullet point #3 describing your responsibilities.

Position Name, *Company/Group Name*, City, State Jan 20XX - Dec 20XX
• Bullet point #1 describing your responsibilities.
• Bullet point #2 describing your responsibilities.

VOLUNTEER EXPERIENCE

Position Name, *Company/Group Name*, City, State Jan 20XX - Dec 20XX
• Bullet point #1 describing your responsibilities.
• Bullet point #2 describing your responsibilities.

ADDITIONAL SKILLS

Languages: List of languages (e.g. Proficient in speaking reading, and writing Spanish)

Certifications: List of certifications (if applicable)

Programs: List of programs you are able to use (e.g., Microsoft Word)

Remember to check your grammar and spelling before applying! Check out the Google classroom for complete sample resumes.

Sample Cover Letter

A cover letter is a formal business letter that accompanies a resume and serves as an introduction of you to potential employers. It will inform the employer of your skills, abilities, and experiences that relate to the job. Since your letter needs to be tailored for each employer, you should do your homework to discover what is unique and special about the organization.

Jane Doe

City of residence, zip code | your_email@gmail.com
123-456-7890 | Any additional contact information/websites

Group name

Address line 1
Address line 2

Date of submitting the application (e.g., February 20th, 2022)

Dear [Insert recruiter name or "Selection Committee"],

Introduction Paragraph: Introduce yourself, the position you're applying for, how you heard about the position, and the skills that

Job Experience 1: Describe one of the job experiences included in your resume and it reflects a skill you listed in your introduction paragraph

Job Experience 2: Describe one of the job experiences included in your resume and it reflects a skill you listed in your introduction paragraph

Conclusion Paragraph: Thank the recruiter for taking the time to review your application and offer that they can reach out to you if they have any questions. (Optional: reiterate your excitement and fit for the job)

Sincerely,
Jane Doe

Remember that your letter communicates your "voice" and your enthusiasm for the organization and the job.

Recruiter Name

Whenever possible, try to find out the recruiter(s)'s name(s) and address them directly in your salutation. This is of course unless the job application says to do otherwise.

Job Descriptions

When describing each job experience, try to share how your work specifically contributed to the successes of the team and how that success reflects your specific skills.

Conclusion

It's always nice to end on a polite note! Thanking recruiters for their time is standard for cover letters.

Evaluating Learning Outcomes

The Tree Ambassador Program aimed to provide community members with the tools, knowledge, and resources needed to grow resilient communities through planting and caring for trees in historically disinvested, low-canopy neighborhoods. Based on our program learning objectives, we hope you've developed skills to:

- Describe the benefits of trees and the potential they have to combat climate change, specifically urban heat, and energy efficiency.
- Identify barriers and obstacles to tree planting and door-to-door canvassing.
- Describe the steps needed to ensure planting the right tree in the right place for the right reason.
- Collaborate closely with urban forestry professionals to achieve urban greening goals.
- Engage your community in proper tree planting and care methods.
- Create an asset map of your community's key stakeholders and urban greening resources.
- Listen, understand, and provide your community with appropriate support.

*Thank you for making a greener Los Angeles
- The Tree Ambassador Team*

Tools for Action

Resume & Cover Letter Help, Courses & Training

Registration for the Arborist Certification - International Society of Arboriculture (ISA)
<https://tinyurl.com/47yxuk26>

ArborPod - International Society of Arboriculture
<https://www.isa-arbor.com/Online-Learning/Podcasts>

Resume Template
<https://zety.com/resume-templates>

Cover Letter Template
<https://zety.com/cover-letter-templates>

Indeed Career Guide
[indeed.com](https://www.indeed.com)

16 Environmental Certifications To Help You Advance Your Career
<https://tinyurl.com/5fn2za48>

Certified Environmental Specialist Training
<https://tinyurl.com/4cm9pffd>

Online Courses in Environmental Science, Natural Resource Management,
Environmental Policy & Civic Ecology
<https://www.edx.org/learn/environmental-science>

Free Online Environmental Science Courses
<https://alison.com/tag/environmental-science>

Certificates

International Society of Arboriculture (ISA) Certificate
<https://tinyurl.com/4cm9pffd>

California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Certificate
<https://tinyurl.com/3d546fp9>

UCLA: Leaders in Sustainability Certificate
<https://www.ioes.ucla.edu/lis/>

GIS Certificates
<https://tinyurl.com/27whmebx>

Tools for Action

Associates Degrees

SMC: Recycling and Resource Management

<https://tinyurl.com/46fwcfnv>

SMC: Environmental Studies

<https://tinyurl.com/3w9prc2w>

Santa Monica College (SMC): Sustainability Systems & Technology

<https://tinyurl.com/yn3fbr75>

Bachelors Degrees

CSULA: Geography

<https://www.calstatela.edu/academic/geos>

CSUN: Urban Studies and Planning & Environmental Science

<https://tinyurl.com/yk8ek5ns>

CSULB: Biological Sciences

<https://www.csulb.edu/biological-sciences>

Occidental College: Urban Environmental Policy

<https://tinyurl.com/bdncbkat>

UCLA: Environmental Science

<https://www.ioes.ucla.edu/envisci/>

USC: Environmental Science and Health & Environmental Studies

<https://tinyurl.com/ma6vfm4u>

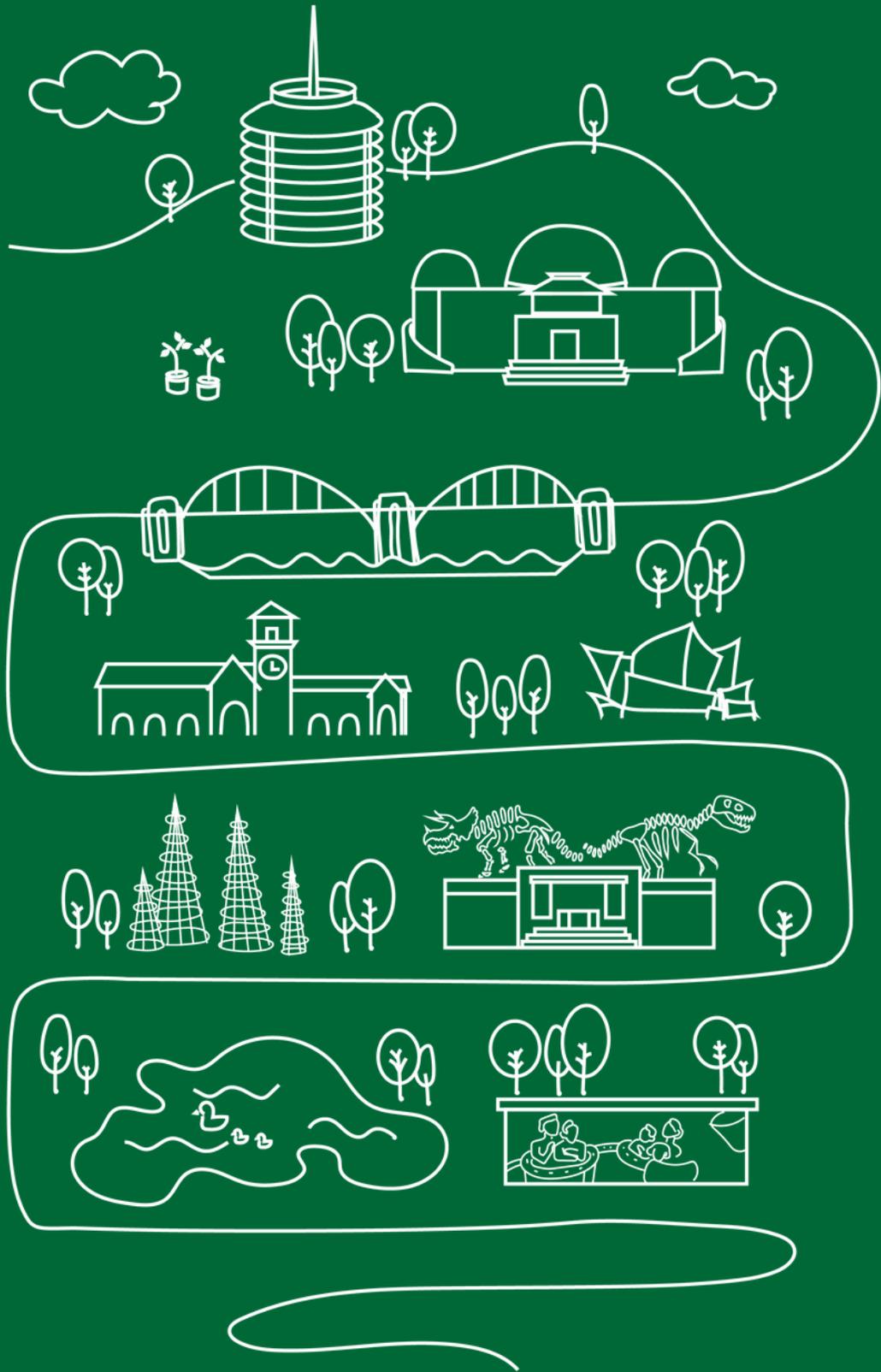
Graduate Degrees

CSULB: Master of Science in Sustainability Management and Policy

<https://tinyurl.com/mxju6k6a>

UCLA: Masters of Urban Planning

<https://tinyurl.com/yftezuby>



Your city. Your voice. Your urban forest.
Tu voz. Tu ciudad. Tu bosque urbano.