

# Agenda Report

**TO: CITY COUNCIL**

**DATE: OCTOBER 6, 2003**

**FROM: CITY MANAGER**

**SUBJECT: PUBLIC HEARING FOR THE NOMINATION OF THE PODOCARPUS GRACILIOR, FERN PINE  
1180 NORTH ARROYO BOULEVARD, FOR  
LANDMARK TREE DESIGNATION**

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## **CITY MANAGER'S RECOMMENDATION:**

Following the close of the public hearing it is recommended that the City Council:

1. Acknowledge that the application for designation of the Podocarpus gracilior (Fern Pine), at 1180 North Arroyo Boulevard, as a landmark is categorically exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (Class 8); and
2. Find that the Podocarpus gracilior, meets criterion for designation of a landmark tree in Section 8.52.020 of the Pasadena Municipal Code, as a "defining landmark or significant outstanding feature" of the North Arroyo area; and
3. Approve the attached resolution designating the Podocarpus gracilior at 1180 North Arroyo Boulevard as a landmark (ATTACHMENT 1);
4. Authorize the Mayor to execute the attached declaration of designation (ATTACHMENT 2); and
5. Direct the City Clerk to record the declaration with the Los Angeles County Recorder.

## **HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION:**

The Commission voted 4 to 1 to recommend that the City Council designate the Podocarpus gracilior, as a landmark.

In its review of the application on July 21, 2003, the Historic Preservation Commission found that the Podocarpus gracilior, qualifies as a landmark for the following reason:

It represents a defining landmark or significant outstanding feature of a neighborhood (§ 8.52.020, G).

## DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS:

The *Podocarpus gracilior* (Fern Pine), at 1180 North Arroyo Boulevard is the subject of the application for landmark designation. This Fern Pine is an ornamental evergreen tree reaching approximately 60 feet in height. Its form is multi-trunk with two 28-inch diameter trunks and one 19-inch diameter trunk measured at breast height. The tree is regularly maintained. Many interior branches have been eliminated to reduce wind shear and litter generation. As a result, the tree canopy is narrower, both by volume and diameter of spread, compared to the same species allowed to grow naturally. The tree does not appear to predate the house at this address, which was constructed in 1926. See photographs (ATTACHMENT 3).

## BACKGROUND:

On April 3, 2003, the staff reviewed an application for landmark tree designation nominating one protected native tree (*Quercus agrifolia*), one protected specimen tree (*Cedrus deodara*), and one *non-protected* tree, *Podocarpus gracilior*, located at 1180 North Arroyo Boulevard. After evaluating the application, the attached arborist report and designation criteria, staff was unable to make the necessary findings to support the designation of these trees and declined the nomination.

### Designation Criteria:

1. A tree associated with an event or structure of historic or cultural significance or importance to the community;
2. Trees that are a defining landmark or significant outstanding feature of a neighborhood;
3. The largest or oldest tree of the species located in the city.

On June 2, 2003, the City Council adopted a resolution amending the Specimen Tree List, adding 45 additional trees. *Podocarpus gracilior* is included in this list and is offered the same level of protection as native trees.

In response to the staff decision, the applicant, Ms. Eleen Takekoshi, modified the request for landmark designation and appealed the decision relative **only** to the *Podocarpus gracilior*, to the Historic Preservation Commission on July 21, 2003.

Ms. Takekoshi contended: (a) that the *Podocarpus* is one of the largest in the area. She also proposes that the tree is worthy of landmark designation because (b) the tree can be seen from distant views, and (c) because the importance and size of the tree were recognized when the house was built in the 1920's, and (d) because "so few large trees on the street or on private property have been saved in the adjoining area to the site in question."

Based on the applicant's testimony, visual observation, and telephone interviews with the Huntington Library, Art Collection and Botanical Gardens, The Los Angeles County Arboretum, and Donald Hodel, author of Exceptional Trees of Los Angeles, published in 1988 by the Los Angeles Arboretum, staff revised their recommendation stating that the subject tree does meet the criteria of being "a defining landmark or significant outstanding feature of the "North Arroyo" neighborhood."

After considering the revised staff recommendation, the Historic Preservation Commission concurred with the analysis that the subject tree was indeed a significant feature in the immediate neighborhood on North Arroyo Boulevard.

#### Designated Landmark

To date, Pasadena has one designated tree as a historic landmark, the Morton Bay Fig, c.1880 at 170 South Marengo Avenue. The City Council designated the Morton Bay Fig as a landmark in March 1976.

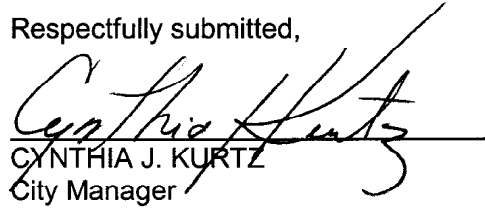
Examples of other cities, which have designated landmark trees include: Santa Barbara, which has 4 landmark trees: A Morton Bay Fig, c.1874, largest and oldest in the nation; Norfolk Island Pine, c.1878; a Fernald Eucalyptus, c.1890; and a Franceschi Flametree, hybrid from Italy, c.1895. Santa Barbara also has a landmark grouping of 79 Italian Stone Pines, planted in 1908. Santa Monica, which has two landmark trees: A Morton Bay Fig, and a Cedrus deodara. A third is proposed for landmark status, a rare species of Eucalyptus, planted by a person of botanical importance, and the City of Palo Alto, which has 6 Heritage Trees, consisting of California Redwoods and Coast Live Oaks.

The Podocarpus gracilior is the second tree nominated for landmark status in the City and the first tree on private property. Landmark status offers an additional level of protection above specimen tree status, requiring a permit to prune the tree. In addition, requests for the removal of a landmark tree will be denied unless the procedures specified for the removal of landmarks and the granting of a certificate of appropriateness is first followed.

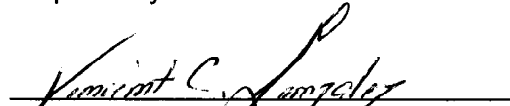
#### **FISCAL IMPACT:**

The General Fee Schedule exempts designated landmarks from fees for Certificates of Appropriateness (permits) from the Historic Preservation Commission. Pruning of a designated landmark tree requires a permit and the pruning work must be done according to the most recent standards of the international Society of Arboriculture. The City may require that a City or a consulting arborist monitor pruning of the tree, in which case, some costs may be recaptured for processing the permit.

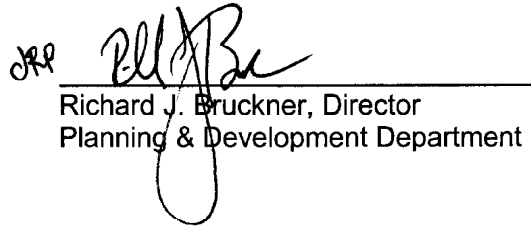
Respectfully submitted,

  
CYNTHIA J. KURTZ  
City Manager

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Approved by:

  
Richard J. Bruckner, Director  
Planning & Development Department

- Attachments:
1. Resolution
  2. Declaration of Landmark Designation
  3. Photograph
  4. Arborist Report
  5. Letters in Support of Nomination