

Agenda Report

DATE: March 23, 2009

TO: CITY COUNCIL

FROM: CITY MANAGER

SUBJECT: TEMPORARY SUSPENSION OF THE REMOVAL OF HEALTHY PUBLIC TREES

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the City Council:

- A. Temporarily suspend the removal of all healthy public trees, for a period of four months from March 24, 2009, to allow staff to complete a review of all streetscape and specific plans for consistency with the Master Street Tree Plan and City Environmental Plans; and
- B. Exclude from this four month suspension period:
 - 1. Dead or dying trees; trees that pose an immediate public health or safety hazard (emergency removals) whereby the City Manager will authorize the removal and provide notice to the City Council within 24 hours of the removal;
 - 2. Trees posing a visibility hazard to traffic signals or traffic signage where pruning of such trees is not a feasible solution;
 - 3. Individual trees where the removal requests have been previously reviewed by the Urban Forestry Advisory Committee (UFAC) and received the concurrence for removal (a list of these trees is attached in Exhibit A); and
- C. During this suspension all public trees that are identified for removal and not included in the exceptions above shall be reviewed by the UFAC. This includes public improvement projects for which Council has approved in concept and are currently in the design phase (these projects are attached in Exhibit B). As these projects move forward during this suspension period and UFAC does not recommend removal and staff finds the removal necessary, these recommendations will be forwarded to the City Council for consideration; and

- D. Direct the City Manager to move forward with the implementation of the Playhouse District, Streetscapes, Walkways and Alleys Plan as it relates to the planting as identified in the 1996 approved plan (identified in Exhibit C) and approved by City Council on January 12, 2009.

BACKGROUND:

On February 23, 2009, the City Council directed staff to return on March 2, 2009, to consider placing a moratorium on the removal of healthy public street trees. After a lengthy discussion and public comment, staff was directed to return to the City Council in two to three weeks to review the recommendation for a suspension of healthy public street tree removals, and with a listing of projects involving tree removals and trees that are identified for removal.

Staff has reviewed the meeting minutes of the UFAC for the past three years and identified those public tree removals that were supported by UFAC that have not yet been removed. A list of these trees is attached as Exhibit A. These tree removals have not yet occurred due to the stages of planning that range from design to implementation. If these removals are not allowed to proceed, the projects, their schedule, and/or funding could be significantly impacted.

Staff was also directed to identify public improvement projects where implementation of the project would impact public trees. These trees are identified in the attached Exhibit B. This list identifies all of the projects that have been approved in concept by City Council and have funds for implementation. Many of these projects are currently in the design phase and therefore the total number of trees to remove is not fully known at this time. As the designs continue and the need for tree removals is identified, the impacts on trees will be presented to the UFAC for their review and concurrence, or onto City Council for final consideration of approval if UFAC and staff are not in agreement.

At the March 2, 2009, City Council meeting, staff was further directed to 1) review Streetscape and Specific plans for consistency with the Master Street Tree Plan and City Environmental Plans; 2) work with the UFAC to review their role in regard to street tree removals; and report back to the City Council in 60 days with a progress report, and in 120 days with final recommendations. City Council also requested that the replacement trees planned for the Playhouse District be delayed during this review period recognizing that this would delay the plantings for these trees by up to nine months, at a minimum. Based on the information below, staff would still like to proceed with the Playhouse District trees as soon as possible.

History of Street Trees Along Colorado Boulevard

In 1988, the then City Board of Directors named a committee to study Colorado Boulevard and prepare an action plan for the future revitalization of Colorado Boulevard. The Colorado Boulevard Steering Committee recommended in their Conceptual Streetscape Plan that the entire length of Colorado Boulevard be unified by similar design elements such as a common street tree. It also recognized the unique value that

the districts offered and recommended streetscape amenities, including the street trees that acknowledged their distinctiveness. As a result, this was considered in the planning phases for the Colorado Boulevard streetscape plans.

Old Pasadena Streetscape:

The Old Pasadena Streetscapes and Alley Walkways Refined Concept Plan, adopted in 1995, set as an objective that the tree selection should consider practical issues such as maintenance costs, visibility of facades, impacts on sidewalks, and tree debris as well as the effect on visibility of businesses and historical building facades. The Pasadena Civic Center/ Mid-Town District Design Project, adopted in 2001, acknowledged both the Old Pasadena Plan and the Playhouse District Plan as having set the direction for the landscape concept for Colorado Boulevard. The plan of the deciduous *Gingko biloba*, Maidenhair Tree, with an alternating palm had been previously established. The Mexican Fan Palm was selected for this district because of the historical presence of the Mexican Fan Palms at the Civic Auditorium and Central Library properties. The plan also recognized that the Mexican Fan Palm helped to reinforce the cross axis of Garfield Avenue with Colorado Boulevard.

East Colorado Specific Plan:

The East Colorado Specific Plan covers the section of Colorado Boulevard from Catalina Avenue to the eastern City Boundary (Sycamore Avenue) with the exception of Pasadena City College between Hill and Bonnie Avenues and the Los Angeles County Property between Northup and Madre on the south side of Colorado Boulevard. The plan established that the existing mature *Washingtonia robusta*, Mexican Fan Palm would also be planted along the entire corridor of East Colorado Boulevard. Species recommendations were made to include trees that are aesthetically pleasing, provided showy flowers, attractive fall colors or large amounts of shade. Native species were also identified as important criteria. As laid out in the plan the species recommendations followed the Council approved process for adoption.

On April 16, 2003 the UFAC reviewed the planting plan for East Colorado and recommended an amendment to the Master Street Tree Plan to plant *Tabebuia avellanedae*, Pink Trumpet Tree on Colorado Boulevard from Catalina to Holliston Avenues; and the *Koelreuteria bipinnata*, Chinese Flame Tree and *Pistachia chinensis*, Chinese Pistache on Colorado Boulevard from Sunny Slope to Sycamore Avenues, all of these species were to alternate with the *Washingtonia robusta*, Mexican Fan Palm. The recommendation was supported by the Design Commission on May 27, 2003, and adopted by the City Council on October 13, 2003.

Pasadena Playhouse District Streetscapes:

An initial review of the Pasadena Playhouse District Streetscapes, Walkways and Alleys Plan approved in 1996, found that the *Washingtonia robusta*, Mexican Fan Palms and *Gingko biloba*, Maidenhair Trees were selected to enhance the aesthetic quality of the District, help define street, sidewalk, and District boundaries and create comfortable

pedestrian scaled spaces. The selection also took into consideration the recommendations of the adopted 1976 Pasadena Street Tree Master Plan, the recommendations of the 1988 'Colorado Boulevard: Today and Tomorrow' study to create a unified Colorado Boulevard, and community input. The Mexican Fan Palm provides an alternate palm to the Queen Palm planted in Old Pasadena, while the Ginkgo links the Playhouse District to Old Pasadena.

The *Washingtonia robusta*, Mexican Fan Palm is slender straight and very fast growing to heights of over 90 feet with a lifespan of 50 to 150 years. It is a drought tolerant, non-native species with no significant pest problems. While it is recognized by the California Invasive Plant Council as an invasive species, this finding relates to trees and plant material planted in a natural setting where their seeds will easily take root and grow quickly. In a developed area such as Colorado Boulevard, this issue is being addressed with annual pruning to remove the seeds and maintaining the tree wells. The *Washingtonia robusta*, Mexican Fan Palm is a recommended street tree for Southern California by Street Tree Seminar Inc. as shown in Exhibit D.

The *Ginkgo biloba*, Maidenhair trees are deciduous, slow growing and long living with a lifespan of greater than 150 years. At their maturity, they can grow to a height of 65 feet with a canopy spread from 20 – 40 feet. The Maidenhair tree is a recommended species in the publication "Street Trees Recommended for Southern California" by the Street Tree Seminar, Inc. (as shown in Exhibit D) and known to be good for street sides because of their non-invasive root system. Maidenhair trees are tolerant to all soils, air pollution, high wind and drought conditions, and thrive in the hot Southern California summers. Photographs of Ginkgo trees in and around Pasadena at various levels of maturity are attached as Exhibit E.

The STRATUM (Street Tree Resource Analysis Tool for Urban Forest Managers) was a short term analysis contracted through Davey Resource Group in 2009 to enable staff to better understand the value of environmental and aesthetic benefits for the implementation of the last phase of the Playhouse District tree planting plan. The study looked at the existing tree conditions, and projected the benefits for five years and fifteen years (the STRATUM report is included as Exhibit F). The most significant area of value for the Ginkgo is the area of energy that places a high value because of growth of its canopy in the summer months and its deciduous form that opens up to allow sun through in the winter

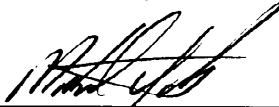
Delay in the planting of the Playhouse District replacement trees will jeopardize the vitality of the Playhouse District and the Urban Forest by delaying the implementation of a well thought out and vetted plan. The Playhouse District tree planting plan resulted from numerous public meetings and discussions and aesthetically links the district to all of the Colorado Boulevard Plans. It is staff's desire to move forward at this time to initiate growth as soon as possible to optimize the trees' growth and establishment of the Maidenhair tree before the next Rose Parade. This will help protect the trees from potential vandalism during the parade when the street is crowded with spectators. It is for these reasons that staff is recommending that the Pasadena Playhouse District Streetscapes, Walkways and Alleys Plan move forward as quickly as possible, as the

vital growing season is rapidly diminishing and staff believes the health to any new trees would be compromised if planted after April 2009.

Fiscal Impacts:

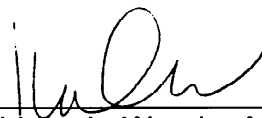
Funds for this project are available in Budget Account No. 73397, Playhouse District Streetscape and Paseo Plan - Phase I; which will complete the implementation of the Pasadena Playhouse District Streetscapes, Walkways and Alleys Plan tree planting project.

Respectfully Submitted,



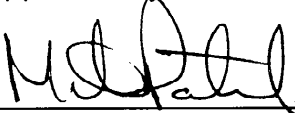
MICHAEL J. BECK
City Manager

Prepared by:



Kathleen L. Woods, Administrator
Parks & Natural Resources

Approved by:



Martin Pastucha, Director
Department of Public Works