

# Agenda Report

June 23, 2014

**TO:** Honorable Mayor and City Council

**FROM:** Department of Public Works

**SUBJECT: MASTER STREET TREE PLAN AMENDMENT – STATE STREET BETWEEN PASADENA AVENUE AND SOUTH ORANGE GROVE BOULEVARD**

**RECOMMENDATION:**

It is recommended that the City Council:

1. Find that tree planting is categorically exempt under California's Administrative Code Chapter 14 Title 3 Section 15061(b)(3); and
2. Amend the Master Street Tree Plan (MTSP) for State Street between Pasadena Avenue and South Orange Grove Boulevard designating *Cinnamomum camphora*, camphor and *Arbutus unedo*, strawberry tree, as approved alternates to the designated street tree, *Prunus cerasifera*, purple-leaf plum.

**URBAN FORESTRY ADVISORY COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION (UFAC):**

On April 23, 2014, Urban Forestry Advisory Committee (UFAC) voted unanimously to support the Master Street Tree Plan (MSTP) for State Street between Pasadena Avenue and South Orange Grove Boulevard, designating *Cinnamomum camphora*, camphor tree and *Arbutus unedo*, strawberry tree, as approved alternates to the designated street tree, *Prunus cerasifera*, purple-leaf plum.

**DESIGN COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION:**

On June 10, 2013 the Design Commission voted 6 to 0 with one abstention to recommend that the City Council amend the MSTP on State Street between Pasadena Avenue and South Orange Grove Boulevard to designate *Cinnamomum camphora*, camphor and *Arbutus unedo*, strawberry tree, as approved alternates to the designated street tree, *Prunus cerasifera*, purple-leaf plum.

**BACKGROUND:**

In December of 2013, four *Cinnamomum camphora*, camphor trees were removed from the 200 block of West State Street due to deteriorating health conditions. Of the 21 trees on the street at that time, only two were purple-leaf plum trees. The remainder of the trees included ten camphor trees and five bottle trees. Subsequent to tree removal, one of the property owners on State Street contacted the Department of Public Works to request an amendment to the MSTP. The request was species specific and sought to designate *Cinnamomum camphora*, camphor and *Brachychiton populneus*, bottle tree species for this street.

In the late 1990s, the Department of Public Works worked with State Street residents to eliminate the sidewalk in some locations on the street to allow for the large buttress roots on the existing camphor trees. While this action eliminated the potential for sidewalk damage by camphor trees, it created a large parkway in some areas and left a smaller parkway in other areas of the street. Residents have indicated that the canopy created by the camphor tree is vital to the street and would like to retain the benefits of the large trees, while also designating a smaller tree for use in the smaller parkways of the street. Allowing a smaller tree in small parkway locations of the street will provide benefits associated with an urban forest in better scale to the size of the parkway and with low potential for damage to the street's only sidewalks.

The Department of Public Works provided the requisite educational resources to the residents including Procedures to Process Amendments to MSTP, Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs), and a link to California State Polytechnic University at San Luis Obispo Urban Forest Ecosystems Institute's Tree Select Guide website.

Residents requested planting *Cinnamomum camphora*, camphor tree where planting space is available, and planting *Arbutus unedo*, strawberry tree for the smaller parkway areas. Subsequently, the Department of Public Works circulated a petition to property owners requesting approval to amend the MSTP for State Street. Six of the seven residents supported the species selection.

The Department of Public Works evaluated the requested amendment to the MSTP and used the following criteria:

- Irrigation needs;
- Potential damage to sidewalks caused by tree roots;
- Microclimate benefit (MCB);
- Tree design and canopy layout;
- Volatile organic compound (VOC) emission; and
- Carbon Dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) reduction.

Camphor trees produce oxygen improving air quality, provide additional shade, and require little water. Strawberry trees are native, drought tolerant, and have a low potential to cause sidewalk damage. Both trees help reduce CO<sub>2</sub> and emit low VOC.

Camphor trees and Strawberry trees best fit the criteria above and the Department of Public Works recommends City Council's approval of this proposal based on the benefits these tree species provide.

**COUNCIL POLICY CONSIDERATION:**

The proposed action of tree planting would advance the City Council's strategic goal to increase conservation and sustainability. Tree planting will also result in improved air quality furthering City Council Action 18 of the Green City Action Plan.


**ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS:**

All planting of trees in the public right-of-way furthers City's goals for the urban canopy. Tree planting is categorically exempt under California's Administrative Code Chapter 14 Title 3 Section 15061(b)(3). These projects will assist in the renewal of the urban forest and are a demonstration of the continued commitment to the development of sustainable growth.


**FISCAL IMPACT:**

Amending the MSTP will not result in any additional costs. Existing trees will not be removed as a result of this action, and street tree vacancies will be replanted as part of the regular street tree planting program.

Respectfully submitted,

  
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SIOBHAN FOSTER  
Director of Public Works

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Attachment A – Petition regarding MSTP amendment for State Street from Pasadena Avenue to South Orange Grove Boulevard