

Agenda Report

DATE: April 6, 2009

TO: CITY COUNCIL

FROM: CITY MANAGER

SUBJECT: EXEMPTION FOR NORTH LAKE AVENUE FROM THE SUSPENSION OF TREE PLANTING PROJECTS IN SPECIFIC PLAN AREAS AND INFORMATION UPDATE ON PLAYHOUSE STREETScape PLAN

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the City Council exempt tree planting on North Lake Avenue, from Orange Grove Boulevard to Walnut Street, from the suspension of tree planting as directed by City Council on March 23, 2009, to allow for Pasadena's 2009 Arbor Day event.

BACKGROUND

On March 23, 2009, the City Council approved the suspension of all tree planting projects in areas that are guided by specific plans in order to allow staff time to conduct a review of the specific plans for consistency with the Master Street Tree Plan (MSTP) and City Environmental Plans. Specifically affected by this planting suspension are the major streets (about 20-25) that have at least some commercial storefront/office activity, with particular attention to the City's Business Districts and include the entire length of Colorado Boulevard, and the entire length of Lake Avenue.

In July of 2008, the City of Pasadena received a finalized agreement with the State of California Department of Transportation for grant funds in the amount of \$250,000 to plant 2,000 trees in the public right-of-way. The approved grant funded project includes funding to cut tree wells in locations where feasible. In accordance with this agreement, the funds must be spent by March 30, 2010. In coordination with the North Lake Avenue Business District, staff established a plan to plant approximately 30 *Platanus acerifolia* 'bloodgood', London Plane trees on North Lake Avenue from Orange Grove Boulevard to Walnut Street for Pasadena's 2009 Arbor Day event, to be held on April 18, 2009. Planting the trees on North Lake Avenue would move forward the implementation of the tree planting portion of the North Lake Avenue Specific Plan.

STREET TREES ON NORTH LAKE AVENUE

In establishing a vision for North Lake Avenue, the North Lake Specific Plan Working Group recognized the value of large shade trees along the length of Lake Avenue to provide shade, improve air quality, narrow the perceived width of the street and give identity, dignity and character to the street. The North Lake Specific Plan was adopted by the City Council on June 30, 1997, and calls for native Oaks and Sycamore trees to be planted on North Lake Avenue. The *Platanus acerifolia* 'bloodgood', London Plane tree is a hybrid developed from the American Sycamore as the urban street tree of choice because of its resistance to anthracnose. The intent of this planting plan is consistent with the MSTP and with all of the City's environmental plans and policies. The two trees that are called out in the MSTP for North Lake Avenue are the *Quercus agrifolia*, Coast Live Oak tree and the *Platanus acerifolia* 'bloodgood', London Plane tree, and both have been planted on Lake Avenue since 1997. Both species have been successful in this and other areas of Pasadena. For future implementation of this plan, staff will plant trees only as vacant sites become available, and there will be no removals of healthy trees.

The *Quercus agrifolia*, Coast Live Oak tree is a native, drought-resistant, evergreen tree, with a very long life span in urban areas of up to 200 years. The trees range in height from 20 to 50 feet with a similar canopy spread with primary branches that can grow horizontally. The crown is broad and dense with foliage. The branches often reach the ground in native settings. In the right-of-way, the oaks are pruned to a 12-foot standard over the curb. This tree is used on Lake Avenue in the parking pop outs where there is more room for a larger tree with this type of spread.

The adopted tree in the MSTP indicates the *Platanus acerifolia* 'bloodgood', London Plane as the alternate tree to be planted on North Lake Avenue. The *Platanus acerifolia* 'bloodgood', London Plane tree was selected as the appropriate species as they are resistant to anthracnose and tends to grow uniformly. The London Plane tree is deciduous, tolerates most soils, smog soot, dust and reflected heat. It is very fast growing and drought tolerant, but will do better with some deep watering in the summer months. At their maturity, the London Plane tree can grow to a height of 60 feet with a canopy spread from 30 – 40 feet. This species is planted in the area just north and south of the freeway where all of the street lanes are utilized and the canopy tree will be trimmed to 14.5 feet over the first lane of traffic.

PLAYHOUSE DISTRICT STREETSCAPES, WALKWAYS, AND ALLEY PLAN

In response to questions raised at the March 30, 2009 City Council meeting, staff has reviewed the Playhouse District Streetscape, Walkways and Alleys Plan and identified the remaining efforts as they relate to tree planting. The existing trees along Colorado Boulevard between Los Robles Avenue and Lake Avenue consist of 52 Ginkgo Bilobas and four Mexican Fan Palm trees. There are 18 locations designated for Ginkgo Bilobas or future canopy trees. Of the 18 locations, 11 require new tree wells. These 11 new tree wells, along with the frames and grates, are being installed with the concrete work

that is currently taking place. No tree wells will be installed where the 60 Mexican Fan Palm trees were proposed. These locations are not standard locations for canopy trees due to their proximity to the street lights.

There is one additional item of the Pasadena District Plan that needs to be installed before the implementation of the Plan is considered complete. This item consists of enhancements for the intersection of Colorado Boulevard and El Molino Avenue, including decorative pavers within the crosswalks and the intersection. The estimated cost for this work is \$400,000. This approved design element of the Playhouse District Plan is currently unfunded.

Street light banners, also an approved design element of the Playhouse District Plan, were installed throughout the district in one of the first phases of implementation. The banners along Colorado Boulevard were recently removed so that the street light poles could be painted under a current contract. The Playhouse District proposes a new style of double banners for Colorado Boulevard between Los Robles and Lake Avenue with an estimated cost of \$30,000. The banners that were removed will be reinstalled if the new banners are not purchased.

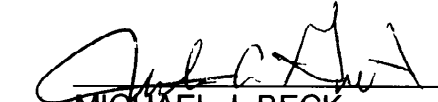
At the March 23, 2009, meeting, the Council further directed staff to engage the community in a public meeting process at which time the community and Urban Forestry Advisory Committee (UFAC) would have the opportunity to consider revisions to the streetscape plans and the MSTP. During the public process staff will facilitate the public meetings and the review of the streetscape plans and the MSTP. Staff does recognize that there exists differences in preferences relating to the selection of species for the Playhouse District and will be sensitive to this as we move this process along.

As the streetscape plans and MSTP are reviewed and new tree species recommendations are made, they will be reviewed by the UFAC for their advisory input. The Design Commission will further review and provide an advisory recommendation. The final recommendations with all changes to the MSTP and the Specific Plans will be forwarded to the City Council for approval of any appropriate amendments. The changes to any species of tree recommended through this process will not result in the wholesale removal of any existing trees without the direction of the City Council. Staff recommends that any trees planted in the future will only occur as trees are lost through natural degeneration, disease, or pest infestation.

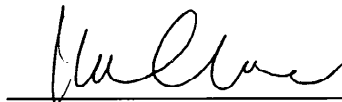
FISCAL IMPACTS

Funds for the tree planting project are available in Budget Account No. 78956, Environmental Enhancement and Mitigation Grant Program.


Respectfully Submitted,


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