

Agenda Report

December 14, 2009

TO: Honorable Mayor City Council
FROM: Public Works Department
SUBJECT: AMENDMENTS TO THE MASTER STREET TREE PLAN IN SPECIFIC PLAN AREAS

RECOMMENDATION:

It is recommended that the City Council:

1. Find that the MSTP amendments for the below referenced specific plans are exempt from CEQA review pursuant to State CEQA Guidelines Sections 15301, Existing Facilities and 15304, Minor Alterations to Land.; and
2. Approve the following amendments to the Master Street Tree Plan (MSTP) by Specific Plan area:

Civic Center/ Mid Town District

Amend the Master Street Tree Plan (MSTP) on Marengo Avenue from Walnut Street to Corson Street to plant the *Quercus sp*, Oak Species in lieu of the *Cupaniopsis anacardioides*, Carrotwood tree;

Amend the MSTP on Marengo Avenue from Colorado Boulevard to Cordova Street to plant the *Liriodendron tulipifera*, Tulip tree in lieu of the *Ficus microcarpa*, Indian Laurel Fig;

Amend the MSTP on Colorado Boulevard from Arroyo Parkway to Los Robles Avenue to plant the *Syagrus romanzoffianum*, Queen Palm or the *Archontophoenix cunninghamiana*, King Palm in lieu of the *Washingtonia robusta*, Mexican Fan Palm.

Amend the MSTP on Thurgood Marshall to plant the *Cinnamomum camphora*, Camphor tree in lieu of the *Magnolia grandiflora*, Southern Magnolia; and

East Colorado Specific Plan

Amend the MSTP on Colorado Boulevard from Catalina Avenue to Sierra Madre Boulevard to plant the *Archontophoenix cunninghamiana*, King Palm in lieu of the *Washingtonia robusta*, Mexican Fan Palm; and

Amend the MSTP on Colorado Boulevard from Sierra Madre Boulevard to Sycamore Avenue to plant the *Phoenix dactylifera*, Date Palm in lieu of the *Washingtonia robusta*, Mexican Fan Palm; and

South Fair Oaks Specific Plan

Amend the MSTP on South Fair Oaks Avenue from California Boulevard to the Southern border of Pasadena to plant the *Quercus suber*, Cork Oak tree as an alternating tree with the *Lagerstroemia indica*, Crape Myrtle.

URBAN FORESTRY ADVISORY COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION:

The Urban Forestry Advisory Committee (UFAC) hosted Community meetings on July 8, 2009, August 12, 2009, October 5, 2009, and November 2, 2009, to review and recommend changes to the MSTP. The above recommendations were supported by the UFAC and carry their recommendation.

DESIGN COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION:

On November 23, 2009, the Design Commission voted unanimously to support the above recommendations.

PLANNING COMMISSION REVIEW:

On December 9, 2009, the Planning Commission reviewed the above recommended changes to the MSTP as they related to the Specific Plans as an information item.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

Upon the direction of City Council, staff worked with the Urban Forestry Advisory Committee to host community meetings to review the adopted MSTP in specific plan areas in context with changing environmental goals and policies. The above recommendations are the results of those efforts.

BACKGROUND:

On March 23, 2009, the City Council approved a staff recommendation to temporarily suspend the removal of healthy public trees for a period of four months while staff completed a review of the streetscape and specific plans for consistency with the

MSTP and City environmental plans. Since the conclusion of the temporary suspension, staff has and will continue to administratively limit the removal of public trees to those that are dead or dying; trees that pose an immediate public health or safety hazard (emergency removals); and trees posing a visibility hazard to traffic signals or traffic signage where pruning is not a feasible solution. In these cases, staff will provide notice of the removal to the City Council in a timely manner following the removal. Additionally, as an administrative practice, staff will continue to have all public trees not included in these exceptions reviewed by the UFAC with their supporting recommendation (trees impacted by City Council approved projects such as parks, buildings, etc.). In an instance where the UFAC does not support the staff recommended removal, staff will have the option to bring forward the recommendation to the City Council for review.

At their May 18, 2009, meeting, the City Council directed staff to work with the Urban Forestry Advisory Committee (UFAC) for a public process that undertook a focused review of the trees in the specific plans areas. This was in response to concern that the trees currently identified in the MSTP may no longer meet the City's environmental goals and policies. Staff prepared a matrix, the Review and Analysis of Species in the Specific Plan Areas that evaluated and weighted trees on a number of factors and highlighted potential maintenance concerns, environmental values and water needs. The focused approach limited the review to trees that had a total score of 60 or less, or their cumulative total on the priority subtotal was less than 6 as identified in the matrix. Council requested that all reviews be completed with any necessary advisory input and returned to City Council prior to December 31, 2009.

Civic Center/Midtown District Design Project:

The UFAC began their review of the street trees in the specific plan areas with the Civic Center/Midtown District Design Project with the first of three meetings on July 8, 2009. The purpose of the meeting was for staff to conduct a site visit through the district to evaluate the existing trees for their consistency with the MSTP as well as the recommendations in the adopted concept plan. Notice for the meeting was sent to the businesses and residents within 1,000 feet of the district totaling 2,900 notices. Additionally, notices were sent to participants in the Civic Center/Mid-Town District Design Project. At the conclusion of the July 8, 2009, meeting the UFAC recommended the following amendments to the MSTP:

Marengo Avenue between Walnut Street and Corson Street - to amend the MSTP to plant the *Quercus sp.*, Oak Species. The MSTP currently calls for the *Quercus virginiana*, Southern Live Oak from Colorado Boulevard to Walnut Street; and the *Cupaniopsis anacardioides*, Carrotwood from Walnut Street to Corson Street tree which is no longer planted due to the brittle nature of the limbs and their sudden limb drop. This recommendation also differs from the Design Project that recommended the *Jacaranda mimosifolia*, Jacaranda tree.

Marengo Avenue between Colorado Boulevard and Cordova Street - to amend the MSTP to plant the *Liriodendron tulipifera*, Tulip tree. The MSTP currently calls for the *Ficus microcarpa nitida*, Indian Laurel Fig tree which is not recommended due to the destructive nature of the root system to the hardscape in this area; and the Design Project recommended the *Jacaranda mimosifolia*, Jacaranda tree.

The above recommendations were made in consideration of the existing conditions on Marengo Avenue. There are currently no *Jacaranda mimosifolia*, Jacaranda trees on North Marengo Avenue in this district. To implement a change would either require removals of existing healthy trees or waiting for the existing trees to fail. On South Marengo Avenue, the *Liriodendron tulipifera*, Tulip tree is planted from Green Street to Glenarm Street. The recommendation would bring consistency in species from Colorado Boulevard going south.

Colorado Boulevard from Arroyo Parkway to Los Robles Avenue – to amend the MSTP to allow for planting the *Syagrus romanzoffianum*, Queen Palm or the *Archontophoenix cunninghamiana*, King Palm in lieu of the invasive *Washingtonia robusta*, Mexican Fan Palm tree. To provide consistency, the UFAC recommended that the selected species be planted consistently on each block with only one species per block.

At their meeting of July 8, 2009, the UFAC also voted in support of retaining *Ficus microcarpa*, Indian Laurel Fig on Green Street and Euclid Avenue and the *Calocedrus decurrens*, Incense Cedar on Holly Street in the MSTP.

The UFAC reviewed the tree species in the Civic Center/Mid-Town District Design Project for the locations around City Hall at two subsequent meetings, on August 12, 2009, and October 5, 2009. At the conclusion of lengthy considerations at both meetings, the UFAC voted in support of the following recommendations:

Thurgood Marshall Street - to amend the MSTP to plant *Cinnamomum camphora*, Camphor in lieu of the *Magnolia grandiflora*, Southern Magnolia in consideration of the reduction in available water and the need to have evergreen trees with large canopies.

Garfield Avenue from Walnut Street to Colorado Boulevard – to amend the MSTP to plant the *Quercus sp*, Oak Species with the exception of the trees in front of City Hall. The UFAC further recommended that if possible to plant the trees in a double row on both sides of the street on the block just south of Walnut Street. The current species for Garfield Avenue is the *Ceratonia siliqua*, Carob tree, which is no longer planted in Pasadena as a street tree.

Parkway trees around City Hall – The UFAC recommended planting the *Magnolia grandiflora*, “Little Gem” Magnolia in lieu of the *Magnolia grandiflora*,

Southern Magnolia in the tree wells on the east and west side of City Hall due to their need for less water and the fact that they do not grow as large. This action does not require an amendment to the Master Street Tree Plan.

The recommended changes within the Civic Center/Mid-Town District Design Project area do not require an amendment to the adopted Refined Concept Plan. The original plan laid out recommendations that anticipated the final selection of tree species would be decided in the Design Development Phase of the project with input from the community, Task Force, City Commissions and Committees including the UFAC and city staff. This review process has been inclusive, and thorough and upon adoption by the City Council, the recommended changes to the MSTP will be forwarded to staff for inclusion in the design development.

East Colorado:

On August 12, 2009, the UFAC hosted a special meeting to review the MSTP in the East Colorado Specific Plan area as it related to the *Washingtonia robusta*, Mexican Fan Palm. Notice of the meeting was placed on trees throughout the East Colorado Specific Plan area. Additionally a press release was widely distributed to media, community leaders, neighborhood association presidents and many others. An article also appeared in the Pasadena Star News informing the community of the review of the palm trees in the East Colorado Specific Plan area.

At the August 12, 2009, meeting, staff presented information on five palm species for consideration. At the conclusion of public comment and discussion, the UFAC voted in support of the following recommendations:

East Colorado Boulevard from Catalina Avenue to Sierra Madre Boulevard – amend the MSTP to plant the *Archontophoenix cunninghamiana*, King Palm in lieu of the *Washingtonia robusta*, Mexican Fan Palm that has been found undesirable due to its invasive nature.

East Colorado from Sierra Madre Boulevard to Sycamore Avenue – amend the MSTP to plant the *Phoenix dactylifera*, Date Palm in lieu of the *Washingtonia robusta*, Mexican Fan Palm that has been found undesirable due to its invasive nature.

The recommended changes within the East Colorado Specific Plan do not require an amendment to the specific plan. The adopted plan provided for final decisions on tree species to be subject to an approval of the City. The recent public review was widely publicized and incorporates feedback from staff, the community and represents the recommendations of the UFAC.

East Pasadena:

On October 5, 2009, the UFAC hosted a meeting to review the MSTP for possible amendments in the East Pasadena Specific Plan area. Notice of the meeting was placed on trees throughout the East Pasadena Specific Plan area. Additionally a press release was widely distributed to media, community leaders, neighborhood association presidents and many others.

At the October 5, 2009, meeting, the UFAC reviewed the *Magnolia grandiflora*, Southern Magnolia on Sierra Madre Villa Avenue and Halstead Street and the *Liquidambar styraciflua*, American Sweet Gum trees on Rosemead Boulevard. The UFAC received a staff report identifying that while the *Liquidambar styraciflua*, American Sweet Gum can cause hardscape damage, the parkways along Rosemead Boulevard are large enough to accommodate the growth of the trees. The public comment reflected a concern with the unsafe condition resulting from the tree's fruit litter.

The UFAC found that the *Magnolia grandiflora*, Southern Magnolia trees are doing very well on Halstead Street and Sierra Madre Villa Avenue getting water from reliable sources. In the locations on Halstead Street where the parkways are smaller, staff has been planting the *Magnolia grandiflora*, Southern Magnolia, "Little Gem" variety that is also doing very well.

At the conclusion of the discussion the UFAC voted to retain the *Magnolia grandiflora*, Southern Magnolia on Sierra Madre Villa and Halstead Street and recommended planting the "Little Gem" variety where the parkway areas are limited. The UFAC further recommended that the *Liquidambar styraciflua*, American Sweet Gum tree to also be retained with a recommendation to plant the *Liquidambar styraciflua* 'Rotundiloba', Sweet Gum variety that does not bear the nuisance balls. Both of these recommendations do not require amendments to the MSTP because the recommendations do not change the identified species.

The recommendations that resulted from this review do not require an amendment to the East Pasadena Specific Plan. The changes that have been recommended retain the adopted species and allow for the planting of more desirable varieties within the same species.

South Fair Oaks:

On November 2, 2009, the UFAC hosted a public meeting to review the MSTP in the South Fair Oaks Specific Plan area. The trees identified for the focused review were the *Liquidambar styraciflua*, American Sweet Gum, *Washingtonia filifera*, California Fan Palm, and the *Prunus cerasifera*, Purple Leaf Plum. Notice of the meeting was placed on trees throughout the South Fair Oaks Specific Plan area. Additionally a press release was widely distributed to media, community leaders, neighborhood association presidents and many others.

During the November 2, 2009, meeting, staff highlighted the landscape concept for the trees within the South Fair Oaks Specific Plan boundaries that identified a plant palette for large and small street trees in the plan area. At the conclusion of public comment and discussion, the UFAC voted to retain the *Liquidambar styraciflua*, American Sweet Gum, *Washingtonia filifera*, California Fan Palm, and the *Prunus cerasifera*, Purple Leaf Plum in the plant palette. However, the UFAC strongly encouraged not planting the *Washingtonia filifera*, California Fan Palm due to the problems with the fronds during windstorms.

The UFAC further recommended that a canopy tree, the *Quercus suber*, Cork Oak be planted as an alternate species on South Fair Oaks Avenue creating an alternating pattern where spacing and building setbacks permit. The UFAC voted to amend the MSTP to allow for the *Quercus suber*, Cork Oak to be planted as an alternate tree on South Fair Oaks Avenue. The *Quercus suber*, Cork Oak is among the plant palette list, and therefore does not require an amendment to the South Fair Oaks Specific Plan.

COUNCIL POLICY CONSIDERATION:

The recommended amendments to the MSTP have been reviewed in consideration of City Council goals and policies.

ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS:

The proposed changes to the MSTP within the Civic Center/Midtown District Design Project, the East Colorado Specific Plan and the South Fair Oak Specific Plan areas are exempt from CEQA pursuant to State CEQA Guidelines Sections 15301, Existing Facilities and 15304, Minor Alterations to Land. Section 15301 exempts from CEQA projects involving minor alterations of existing streets provided there is negligible or no expansion of the existing use. Section 15304 exempts from CEQA projects involving alterations in the condition of land, water and/or vegetation which do not involve removal of healthy, mature, scenic trees except for forestry and agricultural purposes. The proposed amendments to the MSTP will not authorize the removal of existing healthy, mature trees but will authorize different species of trees to be planted in the future.

FISCAL IMPACT:

The change in species for all locations will not incur any installation or maintenance costs.

Respectfully submitted:



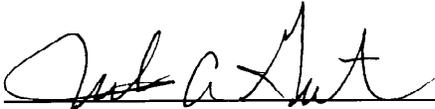
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6/21