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From: CityWeb-Server@cityofpasadena.net [mailto:CityWeb-Server@cityofpasadena.net]  
Sent: Monday, March 02, 2009 4:15 PM  
To: Corey, Delia  
Subject: WWW PUBLIC COMMENT

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Subject: Tree moratorium  
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Comments:

Dear Mayor Bogaard, City Manager Beck, and member of the City Council:

Unfortunately I am not sure that I will be able to attend tonight's City Council meeting, however, I wanted to voice my thoughts regarding the proposed tree moratorium. I am a member of Open Space Now, and am also Vice-Chair of the Open Space and Conservation Element Advisory Committee, but am writing this letter to all of you as a private citizen.

I think most of us would agree at this point in time that the ficus trees currently lining Colorado Boulevard and Green Street would probably not have been selected as street trees if planners could have foreseen the eventual problems with sidewalks and sewers that we are currently having. Certainly, with the benefit of hindsight, different tree species would have been selected and we would not find ourselves in the present dilemma.

However, the trees are here, they do exist, and they are now the source of great controversy and concern. I am disappointed that the trees were removed, but at this point am more interested in what we need to do going forward in order to lessen the impact of what has already happened, and to determine how to address similar problems in the future.

For me, the most important things to consider are:

- 1) Aesthetics
- 2) Shade for pedestrians
- 3) Reduction of carbon footprint/heat footprint
- 4) Suitability / Maintenance
- 5) Compatibility & consistency with existing policies and programs

#### AESTHETICS

Mature trees add to the beauty of our city, and losing them creates visual blight. Removing them all at once or in large blocks is the urban forest equivalent of clearcutting. Certainly other cities have these same trees on their streets - I have not seen anything reported that indicates that either the planning department or the Playhouse District researched what types of mitigating actions other cities have taken in order to preserve their large trees. My understanding was that Pasadena is a city that values its trees - I am hoping that this is still true. One of my favorite stories is that one of my clients from New York City saw a Google map image of Pasadena and was surprised at how many trees he saw, and I would like for that to continue to be the case.

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#### SHADE FOR PEDESTRIANS

The shade offered by a palm tree in no way matches the shade provided by a mature ficus. And while ginkgo trees, when fully mature can provide a useful canopy, they are very slow growing and it will be quite some time before that provide the same level of shade as the trees they replaced. Certainly there are other trees that could be selected that will grow more quickly, provide usable shade within five years, and still be appropriate for Colorado Boulevard. (As an example, I would point out the trees on Washington Boulevard east of Hill - they were planted only a little over 5 years ago, and already provide much more shade than the 10-year old ginkgos on Colorado Boulevard.)

The city has invested a great deal of time, effort and money into encouraging "walkability" - it is ironic that it has removed one of the key components - shade - that encourages people to spend time on the street and makes the pedestrian experience more pleasant and enjoyable.

#### REDUCTION OF CARBON FOOTPRINT/HEAT FOOTPRINT

I am not in favor of healthy, mature trees being removed. However, I can't help but think, couldn't there have been a way that the streetscape plan could have been modified so that new trees had a chance to grow to a beneficial size before the large trees were removed? The stretch of Colorado Boulevard in front of Vroman's has become barren - something that could and should have been avoided. We will never again have the magnificent tree canopy that used to exist, but the current transition to a replacement canopy has been handled in such a way as to have the most negative impact possible. In the meantime, we are now contributing to the urban heat sink, and do not have the benefit of CO2 reduction that a mature tree canopy provides.

#### SUITABILITY/MAINTENANCE

I would encourage the Council and the Planning Department to revisit the current streetscape plan to fully explore what other street trees could be planted instead of ginkgos and palms. The current plan is 13 years old, and our understanding of the benefit that we derive from trees has changed a lot over the years. In addition, I would hope that a modified street tree plan would include provisions for the proper maintenance of the trees so that the problems we currently have are not repeated in the future. At the very least, I would encourage the adoption of policies that acknowledge that "not all trees are created equal", and that any replacement tree needs to provide a similar benefit (particularly as it relates to canopy) as the one being removed.

#### EXISTING POLICIES AND PROGRAMS

I think the thing that has been hardest for me to accept in this whole situation is that recent actions are counter to so many other policies and programs that Pasadena is currently working so hard to put into practice. How can we talk about "green initiatives" and "sustainability", "reducing the use of cars", "conservation" and "environmental awareness", and then engage in actions that are so contradictory? If trees are truly "the lungs of the planet", then it is their proper management, preservation and propagation that helps all of us breathe a little easier.

I would encourage a moratorium on any further tree removal, and strongly advise the review of the points I have made above.

There is one last thing I would like to share. A good friend of mine grew up in Beijing. She told me that at one point in time, the city forefathers were having a problem with birds. Because there were so many birds roosting in the trees, the streets were littered with bird droppings. People were understandably upset, and there were obvious issues of health and aesthetics. The decision was made to address the bird problem by removing the birds' resting places, so most of the trees were cut down. This did indeed solve the bird problem. But because of the loss of trees, the streets became much hotter, and as a result much dustier, which made it hard to breathe, particularly for a population that relied on walking and bicycles as their primary mode of transportation. When I was in Beijing five years ago, the city was busily preparing for the upcoming 2008 Olympics, and doing everything they could to be seen as a "world-class city". The type of preparation that we observed most frequently? The planting of trees.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

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Date: 3/2/2009 4:14:43 PM