

Agenda Report

DATE: January 31, 2011

TO: Honorable Mayor and City Council

FROM: Department of Public Works

**SUBJECT: AMENDMENT TO THE MASTER STREET TREE PLAN FOR THE
FREEWAY SIDES OF CORSON AND MAPLE STREETS TO ALLOW
FOR QUERCUS SPP, OAK SPECIES IN LIEU OF THE MAGNOLIA
GRANDIFLORA, MAGNOLIA**

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 on Corson Street and Maple Street on the freeway sides to allow for *Quercus spp*, Oak Species in lieu of the *Magnolia grandiflora*, Magnolia tree.

URBAN FORESTRY ADVISORY COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION:

On November 10, 2010, the Urban Forestry Advisory Committee (UFAC) voted to reject the staff recommendation to amend the Master Street Tree Plan on Corson Street and Maple Street on the freeway sides which would allow for the planting of the *Quercus spp*, Oak Species in lieu of the *Magnolia grandiflora*, Magnolia tree and instead supported a recommendation presented by a UFAC member to allow the *Podocarpus gracilior*, Fern Pine in lieu of the *Magnolia grandiflora*, Magnolia tree. The vote was three to two with the two dissenting committee members supporting the staff recommendation of *Quercus spp*, Oak Species.

DESIGN COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION:

On April 26, 2010 the Design Commission voted unanimously to support the staff recommendation and UFAC in the choice of the *Quercus spp*, Oak Species, which includes the following: *Quercus agrifolia*, Coast Live Oak; *Quercus engelmannii*, Engelmann Oak; *Quercus suber*, Cork Oak; *Quercus virginiana*, Southern Live Oak; and additionally any other Oak species can be planted such as the *Quercus lobata*, Valley Oak.

On December 13, 2010, the Design Commission again voted unanimously to support the staff recommendation to amend the Master Street Tree Plan on Corson Street and Maple Street on the freeway sides to allow for *Quercus spp*, Oak Species in lieu of the *Magnolia grandiflora*, Magnolia tree.

BACKGROUND:

The UFAC discussed the tree species that would be planted along Corson and Maple Streets on the freeway sides at their February 2, 2010, March 1, 2010, and April 5, 2010, meetings. This topic was also discussed at a community meeting held on March 18, 2010. At their April 5, 2010, meeting UFAC voted three to one in support of the recommendation to amend the MSTP to allow for the *Quercus spp*, Oak Species to be planted. At their April 26, 2010 meeting, the Design Commission unanimously supported the staff recommendation and UFAC recommendation in the choice of the *Quercus spp*, Oak Species.

On August 16, 2010, the City Council requested staff and UFAC reevaluate the proposed amendment to the MSTP and established criteria for selecting a tree species to include a species that is fast growing, drought tolerant, evergreen, and has a large canopy.

As a result, UFAC revisited the issue at their September 8, October 13, November 3 and November 10, 2010 meetings. The November 3 meeting included a tour of many of the tree species being considered. At the November 10 meeting, by a vote of three to two, UFAC voted to support the planting of the *Podocarpus gracillior*, Fern Pine.

At each of the UFAC meetings discussing this MSTP amendment, staff provided a list of trees for consideration that met the criteria set fourth by Council. The UFAC then expanded the criteria and staff responded with an expanded list of potential species. Over the course of the four meetings staff presented over 15 trees species. The recommendation to use the *Podocarpus gracillior*, Fern Pine was presented by a UFAC member at the October meeting. Based on this, staff added it to the list of trees species for consideration and presented it and eight other species at the November 10 meeting.

On December 13, 2010, the Design Commission again voted unanimously to support the staff recommendation to amend the Master Street Tree Plan on Corson Street and Maple Street on the freeway sides to allow for *Quercus spp*, Oak Species in lieu of the *Magnolia grandiflora*, Magnolia tree.

From a maintenance perspective the two most important factors for a tree species planted on the frontage road are: 1) that the tree is extremely drought tolerant; and 2) that the tree has minimal leaf litter. Staff supports the Oak species in this location because the Oaks are extremely drought tolerant. Even in situations where no irrigation and no additional surface water is provided, the Oaks will thrive. Though Oaks do drop

leaves and acorns, the litter is minimal. The *Podocarpus gracilior*, Fern Pine has minimal leaf litter but based on staff's research and experience, this species will tolerate but not thrive in the conditions along the frontage road and may show signs of stress and/or slower growth. If a tree species is planted that is not drought tolerant the tree will suffer from lack of water, and require additional maintenance that will cost the City much more than a drought tolerant option. Planting a tree that is slated to be unsuccessful will also result in high rates of replacement.

Most of the tree sites along the freeway sides of Corson and Maple streets are outside of the soundwall development area and will remain unirrigated. The trees in the soundwall area will be irrigated for the first three years. The Oak species has a better track record for success in situations where access to water is minimal. There is only one oak species that is planted in Pasadena that is partially deciduous, most are evergreen. The Fern Pine is also an evergreen tree. At a mature size the Oak has a large canopy cover and this large canopy will provide significant screening from the soundwall. Additionally, in areas where there is no wall the Oak will provide a better break from the freeway. The Fern Pine can reach the same heights as the Oak but does not have the same canopy coverage. The Oak growth rate at 24 inches per season is a little faster than the Fern Pine at 12-24 inches per season.

The freeway sides of Corson and Maple streets represent unique tree planting locations. There are only a few other locations that are similar to this parkway, having no access to water other than the City's watering truck. New York Drive north of Sierra Madre Boulevard is one such location and Coast Live Oaks are planted at that location. On Union Street most of the Fern Pines are irrigated. The Fern Pines with irrigation are flourishing, and those without irrigation are not as full and lush. Staff recommends the Oak species based on the City arborists' experience and knowledge of the Oak species growth in Pasadena.

COUNCIL POLICY CONSIDERATION:

All tree planting and future tree plantings further Urban Accord #11 "Tree Canopy" by increasing canopy coverage. Although Urban Accord # 11 was met by the City in 2008, the City strives to increase canopy coverage by five percent over the next 20 years. As areas of the City change, there are additional locations for trees to be planted. Parks and Natural Resources staff work with residents, business owners, associations, and constituents to ensure that the trees planted in the public right-of-way meet the neighborhood's wants and needs and that the trees are appropriate for the overall goals of the City's urban canopy.

ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS:

All planting of trees in the public right-of-way furthers the 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 is a demonstration of the continued commitment to the development of the sustainable growth.

FISCAL IMPACT:

The change in species for any location will not incur any additional installation or maintenance costs. Rather the street tree vacancies will be replanted as a part of the regular street tree planting and maintenance program.

Respectfully submitted,



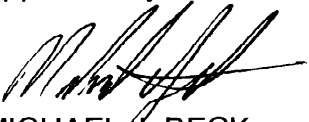
JULIE A. GUTIERREZ
Assistant City Manager/
Acting Director of Public Works

Prepared by:



Darya Barar, Program Coordinator
Parks and Forestry Operations

Approved by:



MICHAEL J. BECK
City Manager