

Date: August 5, 2021

To: Thomas B. Modica, City Manager

From: Eric Lopez, Director of Public Works

For: Mayor and Members of the City Council

Subject: **Request to Establish a Citywide Street Tree Replacement Program**

On April 20, 2021, the City Council directed the City Manager to work with all appropriate City departments and report back within 90 days on establishing a citywide Street Tree Replacement Program. There is a concern over the removal of trees without a uniform plan for replacement. While there are currently programs and options to plant new trees in the City, a dedicated replacement program with identified budgets and timelines does not exist, especially when trees are removed by the City during required maintenance of City infrastructure and/or during the implementation of Capital Improvement Projects (CIPs).

### **Tree Removals and Replacements for Capital Improvement Projects**

In general, a street tree is removed by the Street Maintenance Division of Public Works if it is dead, dying, diseased, uprooted, or damaged and in danger of falling, damaging vital infrastructure, or where tree root-damaged sidewalks and curbing cannot otherwise be safely corrected. For these same reasons, street trees are sometimes removed as part of CIP projects, including during construction or repair of streets, sidewalks, bridges and other public right-of-way infrastructure. The department's current policy does not require that trees be immediately replaced when removed as part of maintenance activities or CIP projects. However, the Department of Public Works has already begun implementing a 1:1 tree replacement policy as part of CIP projects that require the removal of trees, as long as the installation is feasible and does not pose any significant challenges. The Department will incorporate this requirement into the City's standard construction specifications. While this will increase the cost to deliver projects, such increases are anticipated to be minimal.

### **Tree Planting**

The conservation of City street trees, especially those in parkways, involves collaboration between the City and its property owners/residents who are responsible for their maintenance. Various departments partake in the planting, conservation and maintenance of trees. Some departments focus on the establishment of new planting areas, thus enhancing the City's urban forest, and some focus on the removal and maintenance of existing trees to maintain public health, safety, and the renovation or improvement of public infrastructure.

### **Potential Challenges of 1:1 Replanting**

As a city-wide strategy, focusing on implementing a 1:1 tree replacement ratio within both CIP and annual maintenance programs would greatly benefit the urban forest, but is not without challenges. Staff has identified the following challenges that are being evaluated as part of this effort:

# Request to Establish a Citywide Street Tree Replacement Program

August 5, 2021

Page 2 of 2

1. Resident Objection/Lack of Support
2. Site Specific Constraints (e.g., powerlines, parkways size, utilities present, tree spacing, lack of irrigation, etc.)
3. Drought Conditions and Disease
4. Maintenance Requirements and Funding Availability

## Next Steps

Various City departments and offices, community groups, contractors, and other agencies are collaborating and collecting the necessary data to formulate a plan. Staff plans to complete its report in 60 – 80 days to provide more complete details on the following:

- Current processes for tree plantings and/or removals by various City departments
- Proposed improvements to current processes to more effectively maintain heritage trees and the City canopy
- Standards, costs, challenges, and strategies for planting replacement trees by the City on a 1:1 basis
- Feasibility of establishing and funding a citywide tree planting and watering program separate from CIPs
- Other city policy and program efforts to establish and grow an urban forest

If you have any questions, please contact Keith Hoey, Assistant City Engineer, at (562) 570-6586.

CC: CHARLES PARKIN, CITY ATTORNEY  
DOUGLAS P. HAUBERT, CITY PROSECUTOR  
LAURA L. DOUD, CITY AUDITOR  
LINDA F. TATUM, ASSISTANT CITY MANAGER  
KEVIN JACKSON, DEPUTY CITY MANAGER  
TERESA CHANDLER, DEPUTY CITY MANAGER  
REBECCA G. GARNER, ADMINISTRATIVE DEPUTY CITY MANAGER  
MONIQUE DE LA GARZA, CITY CLERK (REF. FILE #21-0335)  
DEPARTMENT HEADS