



Date: July 11, 2023

To: Thomas B. Modica, City Manager 

From: Brent Dennis, Director of Parks, Recreation and Marine 

For: Mayor and Members of the City Council

Subject: **Citywide Tree Trimming and Removal Update**

This memorandum is intended to provide an update on the Department of Parks, Recreation and Marine's (PRM) efforts to remove dangerous, dead and dying trees throughout our park system.

Background:

In 2015, with grant funding from the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection, the department completed a park tree inventory and evaluation. Conducted by professional arborists, this assessment identified over 32,000 trees in our parks and open spaces with nearly 14,000 identified as dead, dying or in critical condition. Since 2015, the trees have continued to decline further due to a historic drought, disease, and invasive pests. The knowledge from the park system-wide inventory and evaluation was key in identifying the real need for attention to park trees, but many years passed before the welcomed support by the City Council in October 2022, with a significant budget investment to allow us to address the dead and dying trees of our park urban forest. Prior to this year's removals, the department had removed more than 2,100 dead and dying trees. The remaining impaired trees, most of which were planted more than half a century ago, continue to pose a significant threat to park user and property safety.

Status:

The Fiscal Year 2023 (FY 23) City budget included one-time funding in the amount of \$1.8 million for the removal of dead and dying trees. Using the inventory report as a baseline, the department is working to identify close to 1,200 of the most dangerous trees to be removed, or 3.75% of the 32,000 park trees. Great Scott Tree Care, who is responsible for tree trimming and removals in the park system, is fulfilling this work under the supervision of the Department's Park Maintenance Operations Bureau. It is important to note, that in addition to the one-time funding for dead tree removal in FY 23, for the first time ever, the department also received funding for a 7-year cyclical tree trimming program. This is the first dedicated funding to address our over 32,000 park trees. This tree trimming program will help keep our park trees maintained in a healthier and safer condition moving forward, a major step in advancement in best practices in tree maintenance.

This tree trimming and removals commenced in November 2022. The project was delayed due to the winter storms that prohibited heavy trucks and equipment from traversing the saturated parks. This year, a total of 662 trees designated for removal within parks in Council Districts

Citywide Tree Trimming and Removal Update

July 11, 2023

Page 2

1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, & 9, has been completed for approximately \$850,000 of the FY 23 budget for this arboriculture work. Nesting surveys were completed prior to this work commencing.

With public safety as the primary priority, communications between PRM and each Council District Office regarding any upcoming tree work or improvement projects have been communicated. Priority tree removals were based upon safety concerns of dead or dying trees near high park activity areas such as playgrounds, picnic areas, fitness equipment, walkways, parking areas, and facilities. Recent arborist inventory inspections have highlighted the basis of why trees that may look fine, but upon closer inspection, show signs of root rot, splitting forked trunks, disease-weakened tree structure and other facts necessitating removal.

In cases where a significant number of trees were scheduled to be removed, a comprehensive power point report will be provided that include photos of the conditions of the trees with explanatory notes to address likely questions from the community. Information will be provided on the PRM website LBParks.org for all tree removals in parks.

Approximately \$950,000 of removal work remains to be completed by the end September 2023. With the remaining funds approximately another 600 trees are scheduled to be removed. Cost of tree removals are based on individual size of each tree. Of that amount, \$400,000 is allocated for El Dorado West and East Regional Park, and \$550,000 as a remaining balance for the following parks:

Carroll Park (CD2), Orizaba Park (CD2), Plaza Zaferia (CD2), Rose Park (CD2), Channel View Park (CD3), Lily Park (CD4), Los Altos Park (CD 4), Los Altos Plaza (CD4), Stearns Park (CD4), Whaley Park (4), Pan Am Park (CD5), Sleepy Hollow (CD5) Wardlow Park (CD5), Willow Springs (CD5).

As park trees are being removed, many questions are raised about plans for replanting. While the department has not had a dedicated budget for new trees to be planted in alignment with tree removal, the community partnership with Conservation Corps of Long Beach along with resources available thru the Department of Sustainability have advanced the planting of new trees in many parks that were eligible for qualified landscape improvements. The Port of Long Beach environmental grant programs have funded tree plantings on the West side of the city. The department has already welcomed the planting of over 800 new trees in parks where dead and dying trees were removed for safety reasons. Additionally, funding for tree replacement citywide will be considered as part of the FY 24 Proposed Budget.

Should Council offices or the community have any questions or concerns, please contact Hurley Owens, Park Maintenance Operations Bureau Manager, at (562) 570-4895 or Hurley.owens@longbeach.gov.

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Department of Parks, Recreation, and Marine
Tree Trimming/Removal Update
Fact Sheet

- In 2015, an inventory and assessment of 32,000 park trees was conducted that identified 14,000 trees as dead, dying, or in critical condition. Most park trees were planted over half a century ago and are reaching the end of their lifespan, not capable of resisting environmental factors causing their decline. These trees have continued to decline further due to a historic drought, disease, and invasive pests.
- FY 23 budget included one-time Measure A funds in the amount of \$1.8 million to address the decline of the park urban forest identified in 2015 and to address the dangerous conditions these trees pose to the public while improving the safety of park spaces for patrons to recreate.
- In addition, FY 23 also included for the first time, \$200,000 in structural funding and \$200,000 in one-time funds to begin a seven-year tree maintenance program. Regular tree trimming will help keep our park trees maintained in a healthier and safer condition moving forward, a major step in advancing enhanced tree maintenance. These funds are not associated with the tree removal project.
- Great Scott Tree Care Services is the contractor for tree trimming and removals. It is in their scope of work to perform nesting surveys and tree evaluations prior to any form of tree work beginning.
- Approximately 1,200 trees (3.75% of park trees) are scheduled to be removed this fiscal year with 662 trees already removed. The remaining tree work should be completed by the end of September 2023.
- The following parks are still left to perform tree removals through the end of September:
 - *Carroll Park (CD2), Orizaba Park (CD2), Plaza Zaferia (CD2), Rose Park (CD2), Channel View Park (CD3), El Dorado West (CD4), El Dorado Regional (CD4) Lily Park (CD4), Los Altos Park (CD 4), Los Altos Plaza (CD4), Stearns Park (CD4), Whaley Park (CD4), Pan Am Park (CD5), Sleepy Hollow (CD5) Wardlow Park (CD5), Willow Springs (CD5).*
- Power point reports have been used to document the current conditions of trees to be removed. The documents provide observations about the tree's health and structural condition that merit its removal. Information about park tree trimming and removal work will be provided on the PRM website at LBParks.org.
- New trees will be planted in collaboration with the Conservation Corps of Long Beach, the Office of Sustainability, and the Port of Long Beach as replanting plans are finalized, and resources become available following tree removals in parks. Over 800 new trees have been planted in parks where dead and dying trees were removed for safety reasons thru CalFire grant funding. Other grant funding is being pursued to an Urban Forestry Master Plan that would position the City for more successful grant funding. The department is focused upon "plan before you plant" for more successful outcomes in developing a healthy urban forest that includes all of our park trees.
- Questions from the community or Council offices can be directed to Hurley Owens, Park Maintenance Operations Bureau Manager, at (562) 570-4895 or hurley.owens@longbeach.gov.