



City of Santa Barbara
Parks and Recreation Department

Memorandum

DATE: July 18, 2007
TO: Park and Recreation Commission
FROM: Timothy Downey, Urban Forest Superintendent
SUBJECT: 729 Fellowship Road

The purpose of this memorandum is to provide the Commission with an overview of the staff and Street Tree Advisory Committee review of the tree removal application at 729 Fellowship Road. While the recommendation is to deny removal, there has been a lot of neighborhood discussion about the Ficus trees located in the 700 block of Fellowship Road. The Street Tree Advisory Committee conducted a special meeting to receive neighborhood input. In addition, the trees on Fellowship Road exemplify some of the difficult urban forest issues facing the City.

In March 2007, an application was submitted requesting removal of the tree located at 729 Fellowship Road. The reasons for removal were sewer lateral repairs made at a significant cost to the applicant, as well as the hardscape (sidewalk) damages. In addition, a list of names with signatures was submitted of other residents interested in removal of all the Ficus trees in that block. This list did not constitute an application for removal. All Ficus trees located in the 700 block of Fellowship Road have similar sidewalk issues. The Parks Division also received letters and emails from residents that did not support removal of the trees.

A special meeting of the Street Tree Advisory Committee was held on Fellowship Road on June 12, 2007 to discuss the issue of the Ficus trees. All neighbors in the area were invited to attend that meeting. A discussion was held regarding all the pertinent issues (damage to the sidewalks, encroachment of the trees into power lines, value of the trees for the street appearance and shade, need to significantly prune the trees, and safety, among others). The consensus at that meeting was that the residents overwhelmingly wanted to do whatever could be done to preserve as many trees as possible.

Planned sidewalk replacement is a key concern for future consideration. The Public Works Department is scheduled to replace damaged sidewalks on Fellowship Road in early Fiscal Year 2008. Parks staff is concerned that some of the trees may be

destabilized by the level root pruning necessary to repair the sidewalks back to original grade. Staff will have the trees substantially trimmed to reduce the mechanical weight of the trees before sidewalk work begins. Although this level of canopy pruning is outside the "Best Management Practices" accepted within the field of Arboriculture, it will be necessary if the trees are to remain. Staff will discuss the possibility with Public Works to modify the sidewalk work whenever possible and minimize root pruning. Some of the means to do that are to ramp the sidewalks, use selective root pruning, and/or reduce sidewalk width when appropriate.

It is the recommendation of staff and the Street Tree Advisory Committee that the removal at 729 Fellowship Road be denied because sewer line damage is not a valid justification for removal and the sidewalk issue will be addressed by Public Works Staff. At the time that sidewalk repairs are made, staff will assess the stability of all affected trees, and make a determination of their safety.