



CITY OF SANTA BARBARA

DOWNTOWN PARKING COMMITTEE AGENDA REPORT

DATE: October 11, 2012
TO: Downtown Parking Committee Members
FROM: Alison Jordan, Water Conservation Supervisor
SUBJECT: Train Station Water Wise Grass Project

RECOMMENDATION:

That the Downtown Parking Committee receive a report regarding the Train Station Water Wise Grass Project.

DISCUSSION:

The project consists of replacing existing high water using turf on the south side of the train tracks with very low-water using grass. This site has presented a unique challenge with its historic nature including a requirement for grass to be used around the train station. However, the grass that initially was planted is high water using and not in-line with City's water conservation goals. Planting a water wise grass was identified as a solution that meets both needs. Staff will promote this visible and educational lawn as a demonstration to City residents.

The site in question is comprised of the two turf triangles on the south side of the train tracks. The turf will be removed; all other existing shrubs and trees will remain. The 9,929 square feet area will be planted with either of two water wise grasses: UC Verde Buffalograss, or Bent Grass (*Agrostis pallens*) - to be determined by the Historic Landmarks Commission Landscape Architect. Both of these water wise grasses have been shown to work well in the Santa Barbara climate, are available locally, and can be planted as sod or plugs.

Both species of water wise grass are slow growing in height and require little mowing, roughly 4 times a year, in the summer. Mowing on existing high water using turf occurs once per week. Less mowing will result in significantly lower maintenance costs.

In addition, the existing pop-up irrigation system will be converted into a subsurface irrigation system. This will lower water usage and costs as well as reducing maintenance of replacing broken sprinkler risers. The irrigation schedule will be reduced to match low-water use requirements of the grass. It is estimated that the water savings will be 50-85%.

In order to successfully remove the existing turf completely without re-growth, staff will ask for an exemption from the City's IPM Committee to use minimal Roundup to spray re-growth only. Experience has shown that when replacing old grass with new grass, significant re-growth will occur of old grass and weeds into new grass if Roundup is not used. We will take precautions to use as little spraying as necessary by sod-cutting the existing turf, raking up the seeds, tilling the soil, and only using Roundup to control the

spots of re-growth. Fencing will be placed around both triangles before spraying is done, and will remain up until the new turf is strong enough to take foot traffic.

The intent of this project is to reduce water usage and to create a demonstration for the public to show that water wise grasses are beautiful and functional. This will create a significant long-term environmental benefit of increasing Santa Barbara residents' use of water wise grasses.

City's Water Conservation Program will provide funding for the project. There will be no cost to Transportation Division for the project.

SUMMARY:

The project consists of replacing existing high water using turf on the south side of the train tracks with very low-water using grass. There will be significant cost savings from both reduced water usage and lower maintenance costs.