

CITY OF SANTA BARBARA WATERFRONT DEPARTMENT

MEMORANDUM

Date: July 18, 2013
To: Harbor Commissioners
From: Scott Riedman, Waterfront Director
Subject: **Parking Lot Landscape Maintenance Program**

RECOMMENDATION:

That Harbor Commission receive a report on the Waterfront's Parking Lot Landscape Maintenance Program.

BACKGROUND:

The City of Santa Barbara Waterfront Department (Waterfront) operates eight parking lots. Seven of the lots have extensive landscaping that is currently maintained by the City's Parks and Recreation Department (Parks Division). This report provides a brief description of each lot, scope of work (including extra work), history, and program oversight of the Waterfront's parking lot landscape maintenance.

Parking Lot Descriptions:

For the sake of comparison, each lot description contains information on common characteristics including number of stalls, number of landscaped planters, landscaped perimeter areas, and trees.

Leadbetter – The Leadbetter lot extends from the Loma Alta entrance on the east to the picnic area on the west. Landscaping around the public restroom is also included.

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|-----------------------|----------------|
| Total stalls | 288 |
| Landscaped planters | 19 |
| Perimeter landscaping | 11,600 sq. ft. |
| Trees | 65 |

Harbor West – The Harbor West lot extends from Harbor Way on the east to the Loma Alta entrance to the west.

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|-----------------------|----------------|
| Total stalls | 285 |
| Landscaped planters | 21 |
| Perimeter landscaping | 21,000 sq. ft. |
| Trees | 44 |

Harbor Main – The Harbor Main lot includes all parking to the east of Harbor Way including the launch ramp area. Landscape maintenance at the Harbor Way entrance and the Harbor Commercial area are included as part of this lot.

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| Total stalls | 782 |
| Landscaped planters | 76 |
| Perimeter landscaping | 58,800 sq. ft. |
| Trees | 200 |

Chase Palm Park – The Chase Palm Park lot is located adjacent to Skater’s Point at the south end of Garden Street.

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|-----------------------|---------------|
| Total stalls | 260 |
| Landscaped planters | 26 |
| Perimeter landscaping | 5,350 sq. ft. |
| Trees | 45 |

Garden – The Garden Lot is located at the northwest corner of Cabrillo Boulevard and Garden Street.

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|-----------------------|---------------|
| Total stalls | 215 |
| Landscaped planters | 24 |
| Perimeter landscaping | 1,425 sq. ft. |
| Trees | 50 |

Cabrillo East & West – The Cabrillo East & West lots are located adjacent to the Cabrillo Arts Pavilion.

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|-----------------------|----------------|
| Total stalls | 268 |
| Landscaped planters | 6 |
| Perimeter landscaping | 17,600 sq. ft. |
| Trees | 25 |

Scope of Work:

The scope of work for all the lots was defined when the Parks Division assumed complete landscape maintenance responsibilities in 2003. Standards were identified for the various landscape features such as planters, perimeter areas, and trees on a lot-by-lot basis. The majority of the landscaped areas are on an irrigation system, some of which use the City’s recycled water.

The Harbor Way entrance and Harbor commercial area in the vicinity of the Breakwater Restaurant and Waterfront Center receive the most landscape maintenance effort. The landscaping is contained in planters and is serviced Monday through Friday with weeding and trash removal. Annual flowers are planted throughout the year to provide the greatest “curb appeal”.

All of the lots have planters with a variety of different plants acclimated to the marine environment and/or are drought tolerant. Most of the planters contain well established plants with landscape maintenance consisting primarily of weeding and occasional plant replacement. Some of the planters have no irrigation, are located in low use areas, and receive the lowest level of effort.

Most of the lots have large perimeter areas that are landscaped with a variety of plants, hedges, or lawn. Lawn care takes the most time and effort with routine mowing, periodic aeration, fertilization, and irrigation repairs. Many of the landscaped perimeter areas consist of hedges that are trimmed four times a year. Some perimeter landscaping receives minimal maintenance due to high foot traffic that prohibits plants from growing without significant effort.

There are over 1,000 trees along the Waterfront with approximately 300 large trees in the parking lots that require routine trimming by skilled tree crews under the supervision of an arborist. Specialized equipment is required to access the upper limbs and dispose of the plant material. The vast majority of the trees are palms that have dead fronds removed approximately every other year. Allowing the dead palm fronds to remain on the tree poses a hazard to the public during strong winds. Eucalyptus trees, coral trees, and New Zealand Christmas trees do well at the Waterfront and constitute the other trees subject to routine tree trimming. Smaller trees are currently trimmed by hand crews but will eventually require significantly more effort to trim as they grow larger.

There is a large network of irrigation throughout the lots that has been gradually installed over the past 30 years. Some of the lots use recycled water where it is available. The irrigation system is controlled through a series of programmable controllers and is adjusted seasonally to provide additional water in the dry months and less water in the winter.

Controlling weeds is a significant part of landscape maintenance. The City adopted an Integrated Pest Management (IPM) Strategy called the PHAER Zone (Pesticide Hazard and Exposure Reduction) model that essentially eliminated the use of herbicides to control weeds. The vast majority of weeding is done mechanically with the exception of a few pre-approved areas located far from any public access.

Parks provides extra services at the request of the Waterfront. Extra work includes landscaping new areas, removing large trees that fall or are diseased, replacing large trees, opening storm drains, building sand berms, and post-storm clean up. This work is infrequent but can be time consuming and costly. For example, there were several coastal storms with large waves in 2008 that required major cleanup efforts in the Harbor West lot. Removing sand, kelp, and other storm debris is required immediately after the storm to open the lot.

History:

Parking lot landscape maintenance was provided by the Parks Division, private contractors paid for by the Parks Division, and private contractors paid for by the

Waterfront prior to June 2003. As areas such as the Waterfront Center were remodeled and leases transferred back to the Waterfront, the need for landscape maintenance increased. Many palm trees were added to the Harbor Commercial area that began to mature and required trimming. In an effort to consolidate landscape maintenance efforts, Parks prepared "Maintenance Standards and Costs" as part of their FY2004 budget and entered into a letter agreement with the Waterfront to pay for \$100,000 of the estimated \$125,000 for landscape maintenance.

During the FY2007 budget deliberations, Council directed the Waterfront to cover the complete cost of landscape maintenance provided by the Parks Division based on an updated cost recovery analysis at an annual cost of \$207,920. Some of the increases in costs since the 2003 estimate were related to the City's 2004 adoption of the IPM Strategy which essentially eliminated the use of pesticides resulting in much higher labor costs for weed control.

The annual cost of landscape maintenance provided by the Parks Division is adjusted per the Consumer Price Index (CPI). There were CPI adjustments in fiscal years 2008, 2009, and 2010 increasing the annual cost to \$229,325. There have been no CPI adjustments since 2010. Council recently directed the Waterfront to continue compensating Parks for all parking lot landscape maintenance during their FY 2014 – 2015 budget deliberations.

Program Oversight:

Waterfront and Parks Division staff work closely together to provide oversight of landscape maintenance. Key staff members perform a monthly "walkthrough" at each lot to review work recently completed and to identify other landscape maintenance needs. The Parks Division provides a monthly invoice with costs for each lot that includes labor, materials, and equipment. Extra work is identified and performed by Parks on an as-needed basis.

Since 2008, the monthly invoices have been compiled to compare the amount of work performed at each lot. Certain trends are apparent such as the majority of time, effort, and cost occur at the Harbor Main lot and the Harbor Commercial area. These areas have the most public exposure and providing aesthetically appealing landscaping is a high priority for Parks and the Waterfront.

The outlying lots do not receive the same level of service but Parks attempts to maintain as much aesthetic appeal as possible within the Council approved budget. The Parks Division installs low-maintenance and drought tolerant plants to the maximum extent feasible in these areas. Labor associated with weed control is reduced by the use of chips placed in planters. Much of the perimeter landscaping is comprised of hedges that require less frequent maintenance. Certain areas with high foot traffic receive minimal maintenance in an effort to keep costs down so that more time and money can be spent in the Harbor Main lot and Harbor Commercial areas.

Review of the monthly invoices helps staff manage landscaping throughout the year. With the exception of storm clean up, staff attempts to minimize landscape maintenance in the winter months to free up funds for the spring in anticipation of the busy summer season. With seven lots to maintain, Waterfront and Parks Division staff continue to work together to focus efforts where needed while managing to keep the landscape program on budget.

SUMMARY:

Parks has provided full service landscape maintenance in all the Waterfront parking lots for over a decade. Waterfront and Parks staff have developed a close working relationship to manage the Waterfront's landscape needs. The Parks Division is very responsive, flexible, and conscientious about the landscape services they provide. There are rarely complaints about the service provided but frequent compliments. Parks is held accountable for the services they provide through monthly inspections, invoicing, and routine meetings with Waterfront staff. The Parks Division is capable of responding 7 days a week after strong winds and coastal storms to clean up the Waterfront making it safe and accessible to the public. Council has considered the cost of Parks landscape maintenance during several different budget deliberations and consistently directed the Waterfront to compensate Parks for their efforts. Landscape maintenance at the Waterfront will continue to be a high priority for staff in an effort to maintain the aesthetic appeal and character of the area that the public has come to expect and enjoy.

Attachment: Waterfront Parking Lot Map

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