



CITY OF SANTA BARBARA
PARK AND RECREATION COMMISSION REPORT

AGENDA DATE: October 24, 2007
TO: Park and Recreation Commission
FROM: Parks Division, Parks and Recreation Department
SUBJECT: Tree Inventory Project

RECOMMENDATION: That the Commission hear a report on the status of the Street and Park Tree Inventory Project.

DISCUSSION:

Background

On May 22, 2007, Council authorized the Purchasing Manager to issue a purchase order to West Coast Arborists, Inc. (WCA), to perform a street tree and park tree inventory in the City of Santa Barbara.

The last tree inventory prepared for the City was completed in the early 1990's. That inventory is outdated and incomplete. A new street tree inventory is necessary to provide updated information on the City's urban forest. WCA currently provides street tree trimming services for the Parks Division and has the ability to perform tree inventory data collection.

This updated information will:

- Provide accurate tree information for planning work to be conducted by the Urban Forestry Program;
- Provide information on exactly where each specific tree is located because it may be the only species in the area;
- Assist with horticultural heritage in Santa Barbara and the City's commitment to community forestry; and
- Provide for electronic maintenance of data.

The City has approximately 30,000 street tree sites. This includes sites where current trees exist and sites where opportunities exist to plant more trees. In addition to an inventory of street trees, WCA will conduct an inventory of 4,500 trees in six City parks selected due to their horticultural value. The parks include Franceschi, Upper and Lower Orpet Parks, East and West Alameda Parks, and Alice Keck Park. The inventory will provide the Global Positioning Satellite (GPS)

coordinates, (X/Y coordinates) for each City tree location. These X/Y coordinates indicate the longitude and latitude of the site in relation to the world.

Status and Benefits

WCA is approximately 75% complete with the inventory. They have completed most of the lower portions of the City and will be working to complete the hillside areas and parks. Part of the data collection includes collecting the GPS coordinates which will allow the trees to be shown as a layer on the City's mapping system.

Completion of this inventory will allow staff to develop a comprehensive Urban Forest Management Plan to project where we need to provide maintenance in a planned and organized manner. This will be achieved by setting specific maintenance zones within the City. Staff will have the ability to better project future budget expenditures and maintenance needs, as well as record history of past work reducing the need to keep records on paper. This record keeping will assist with providing information regarding maintenance, when there are street tree incidents. Completion of an up-to-date street tree inventory will also allow staff to compete for grant opportunities.

This inventory will allow Parks Division to work more effectively with the Public Works Department. Curb or sidewalk defect information that is collected will assist Public Works to understand how many sidewalks are damaged throughout the City.

The inventory will help staff provide quality and timely customer service. Information will be accessible while answering calls, avoiding the need to follow-up. Other divisions can have access to the inventory allowing them to determine if a City tree is at their project site and may affect their job, or that their job may affect Forestry.

Finally, this inventory is the basis for understanding Santa Barbara's tree diversity and value. Trees are the only infrastructure item with the potential to increase in value. This information can be used to calculate how much City trees benefit the environment and community. When the inventory is complete, staff will develop a plan to make portions of it available to citizens online.

Budget/Financial Information

The cost to inventory 34,500 trees is \$62,100. In the event the number of street tree and/or park tree sites exceeds 34,500, a contingency amount of \$6,210 has also been included.

Staff also recently submitted a grant proposal in the amount of \$42,000 to the California Department of Forestry and Fire (CALFIRE) to expand the inventory to include an additional 30 parks and an estimated 13,000 park trees. If awarded, the grant will also fund the development of four tree tour maps, a community tree guide, and the ability to post these maps on the City's website.

PREPARED BY: Tim Downey, Urban Forest Superintendent

Park and Recreation Commission Report
Street Tree Inventory
October 24, 2007
Page 3

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