



CITY OF SANTA BARBARA

PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION REPORT

AGENDA DATE: July 25, 2012

TO: Parks and Recreation Commission

FROM: Administration Division, Parks and Recreation Department

SUBJECT: Street Tree Master Plan Review

RECOMMENDATION: That the Commission receive presentation on the comprehensive review of the Street Tree Master Plan.

DISCUSSION:

Introduction

The City of Santa Barbara has a long history of municipal tree planting and a diverse urban forest. Initially spearheaded through the horticultural and civic leadership of prominent City residents in the late 1800s, the City's urban forest is currently comprised of more than 50,000 trees along public streets and in parks and other public places, and an estimated 250,000 trees on private property. There are more than 474 species of trees on public property, of those, 143 are uniquely planted on city streets.

Street Tree Master Plan

The Parks and Recreation Department (Department) is responsible for maintaining the Street Tree Master Plan (STMP). The STMP was established and adopted in 1977 by Santa Barbara City Council, Resolution No. 3863 and is referenced in Chapter 15.20 of the Santa Barbara Municipal Code. The purpose of the STMP is to develop a comprehensive plan for the preservation, maintenance, and planting of all trees located within the public right-of-way and street easements.

The City developed the STMP to establish planting guidelines that would preserve and enhance Santa Barbara's image, character, and aesthetic beauty through a well planned and established street tree system. The STMP included an inventory of all existing trees and planting areas, an official street tree list, an official street tree planting plan, a systematic street tree maintenance schedule, and computer adaptation of the program.

Street Tree Master Plan Designation Review

The Street Tree Advisory Committee (STAC) was established on December 20, 1979, to provide advice to City staff, the Parks and Recreation Commission and City Council regarding street trees, trees in front yard setbacks, and park and golf course trees. STMP designations are first reviewed by the STAC and then forwarded to the Parks and Recreation Commission for a final decision.

There are many reasons why a street tree designation may change. These can include the need to address issues with spacing, performance, aesthetic appeal, overhead utilities, and sidewalk management, as well as to increase overall diversity of species on a particular street. The Commission also approves designations for new development when a species has not yet been designated. Once approved, the Street Tree Designation list is updated with the changes to species designation.

Street Tree Master Plan Review

In May 2012, the Department initiated a comprehensive review of the STMP to:

- Update the database to include dates of designation changes and reasons of change.
- Confirm the current database included all street tree designation changes since its inception.

The goal of the project is to improve record keeping and data management, facilitate management discussions pertaining to street tree designations, and track changes over time. The review confirmed all records of approved species designation changes that have occurred since 1976.

Methodology

Staff reviewed all Parks and Recreation Commission reports and meeting minutes, Street Tree Advisory Committee (STAC) meeting minutes, and Parks and Recreation Tree information sheets and made changes to the STMP database as necessary. This included manual searches in current and archived electronic copies and hard copies between 1976 and 2012.

Results

As illustrated in Table 1 on the following page, there are a total of 1,103 street segments associated with the STMP. Of these, 969 street segments have a designated street tree and 134 do not. Of the 969 blocks with designated tree species, 295 of them have changed since 1977.

Table 1. Street Tree Master Plan Review Summary Table

Number of Street Segments with designations	969
Number of Street Segments without designations (Planned/None)	134
Total Street Segments In STMP	1,103
Designation Changes to Original 1977 STMP	295
Street Segments with no change since 1977 STMP	598
Number of STMP Designated Species	124
Number of Street Tree Species Present in Street Tree Population	368

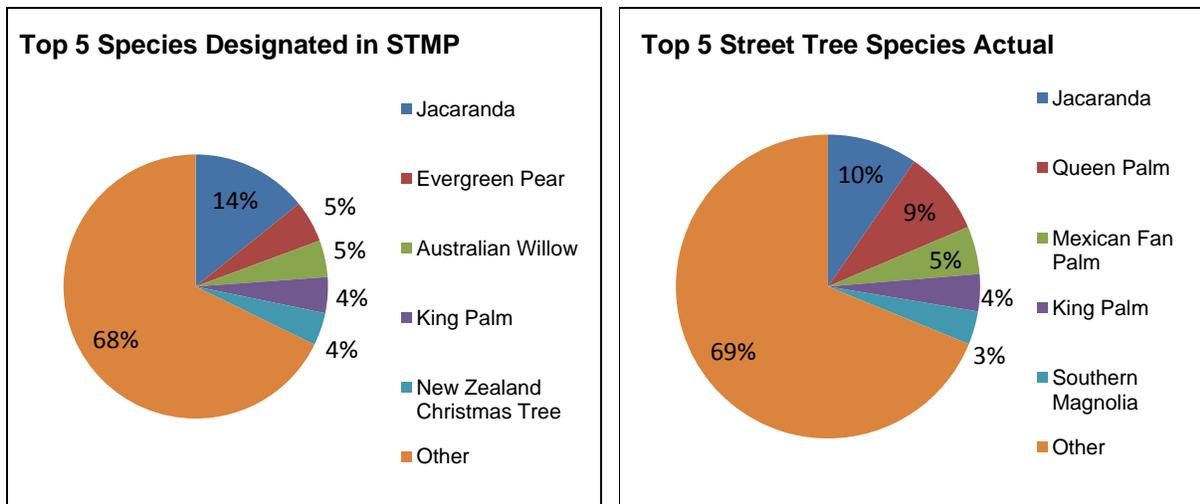
The STMP has 124 designated tree species. This accounts for approximately 34% of the actual street tree population. Table 2 and Figure 1 below compare the top five species found in the STMP with the top five found in Santa Barbara's street tree population. Jacaranda species is both the most commonly designated STMP species and the most common species occurring in the streets today. Another similarity in species distribution is for the King Palm. In both cases, it is the fourth most common species, accounting for nearly 4% of both STMP designations and actual population representation.

The comparison diverges with the remaining three species. While the street tree population is likely to have a variety of palms and the Southern Magnolia, the more commonly designated STMP species include the Evergreen Pear, Australian Willow, and New Zealand Christmas tree.

Table 2. Comparison of Species Occurrence in STMP
 with Actual Street Tree Population

Top 5 Species Designated in STMP			Top 5 Street Tree Species (Actual)		
Common Name	Blocks Designated	% Occurrence	Common Name	Number Street Trees	% Occurrence
Jacaranda	139	14%	Jacaranda	3248	10%
Evergreen Pear	50	5%	Queen Palm	3035	9%
Australian Willow	44	5%	Mexican Fan Palm	1719	5%
King Palm	43	4 %	King Palm	1333	4%
New Zealand Christmas Tree	39	4%	Southern Magnolia	1199	4%
Other	654	68%	Other	23250	69%
TOTAL	969	100%	TOTAL	33784	100%

Figure 1. Comparison Chart of Species Occurrence in STMP
 with Actual Street Tree Population



Summary

The STMP is an important document and database tool used to facilitate street tree plantings and removals for the benefit and safety of residents. Because of its value to the public review process, the review was completed to confirm that all records have been transcribed since 1977. Understanding when and why designation changes occur allows managers to assess the function and value of certain tree species over time.

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