



Information Item

Date: July 6, 2011

To: Mayor and City Council
From: Andy Agle, Director of Housing and Economic Development
Subject: Trees at Mountain View Mobile Home Park

Introduction

The City owns and operates the Mountain View Mobile Home Park (the Park). This report provides information in response to the petition e-mailed to City Council on May 8, 2011 and comments made during the public comment portion of the May 10, 2011, City Council meeting regarding the pine tree located on Spaces #35 and #36 at the Park.

Background

The Park was established approximately 60 years ago. Over the years, trees have taken root in the Park in a variety of ways -- some were intentionally planted, some were in pots and the roots eventually broke through and took root in the ground, and others seeded and grew naturally. The varieties and locations of the trees indicate the lack of a coherent plan regarding appropriateness (height and canopy when mature) or location (proximity to homes). Attached as Exhibit A are photos showing examples of randomly planted trees that now impact the removal of existing homes or the installation of new homes.

Discussion

The Housing Division is currently in the process of replacing City-owned travel trailers and mobile homes with twenty (20) new affordable, sustainable manufactured homes. The location of the new homes has been determined based on an assessment of many,

sometimes competing, factors including: enabling residents to remain on the spaces they currently occupy; providing each family with a home appropriately sized for the household; implementing reasonable accommodations for residents with disabilities (i.e. handicapped ramps, handicapped accessible homes); minimizing relocation of utilities; and minimizing trimming, relocation and removal of trees. To date, 10 of the 20 homes have been installed.

Housing staff, in consultation with the City's Community Forestry staff, assessed each affected tree on a case-by-case basis to determine the appropriate course of action. With regard to the pine tree on Spaces #35 and #36, staff concluded that removal of the tree was the appropriate course of action due to the location of the tree at the rear of the Park, the size of the tree's canopy, and the fact that new appropriately sized new homes could not be installed on Space # 35 and Space #36 if the tree were to remain in place.

The trees in the Park are maintained by a vendor hired by the property management agent that operates the Park on behalf of the City. However, in an effort to assist Housing staff with the removal of the pine tree, the City's Community Forestry staff posted the tree with the standard notice used for removal of public trees. Subsequently, the City Attorney reviewed the City's current Community Forest Management Plan, considered State law and the municipal code, and determined that trees planted by private citizens on City-owned land that is not open to the public are not in the same category as public trees and are therefore not legally subject to the same local requirements for maintenance and removal. Therefore, the public notice was not required and the tree's removal is not subject to the criteria listed in the Community Forest Management Plan.

However, in light of the petition, staff felt it prudent to hire a third-party registered consulting arborist to evaluate all trees that could be impacted by the remainder of the project. In addition to the pine tree, staff identified one (1) palm tree and three (3) ficus trees that could potentially require relocation or removal. Attached as Exhibit B is the

registered consulting arborist's report recommending removal of all five identified trees due to compromised root systems and a relocation cost estimated at nearly four times the appraised value of the trees. Given the compromised root systems and relocation costs, Housing staff and Community Forestry staff concur with the arborist's recommendation. New trees which are appropriately selected and sited will replace the existing trees.

Summary

Housing staff plans to schedule removal of the pine tree and the palm tree as soon as possible and the ficus trees if and when absolutely necessary, to enable the installation of the new homes that have already been manufactured for these spaces. Housing staff will continue to consult with Community Forestry staff and evaluate each tree on a case by case basis, both for the current installation of the 20 City-owned homes and for all future needs of the Park and Housing staff will consult with Community Forestry staff to develop a plan for all trees planted in the Park in the future to ensure that species and locations are appropriate to the Park. Furthermore, in lieu of spending \$18,000 on tree relocations which would have a high risk of failure, staff plans to utilize those funds to install three (3) new trees for each one (1) tree that is removed.

Prepared By: Melissa Lindley, Senior Development Analyst

Exhibit A – Examples of Trees Planted Without Regard to the Location of Existing or Future Homes

Exhibit B - Consulting Arborist's Report

Exhibit A

Examples of Trees Planted Without Regard
to the Location of Existing or Future Homes



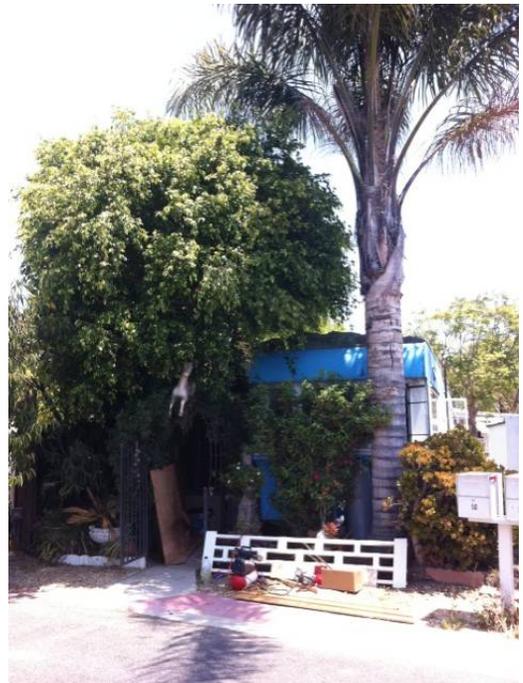
Space #36



Space #41



Space #45



Space #50



Space #71



Space #87



Space #E-3



Space #G-3



Space #G-4



Space #I-2

TREE REPORT

PREPARED FOR:

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City of Santa Monica
Housing Division
1901 Main Street
Santa Monica, CA 90405

PROPERTY:

Mountain View Mobile Home Park
1930 Stewart Street, Santa Monica, CA 90404

PREPARED BY:

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May 20, 2011

SUMMARY

The Mountain View Mobile Home Park is currently undergoing a gradual phasing in of mobile home replacements. Some of these existing mobile homes have trees within close proximity that will be impacted by the removal and installation of new units.

Transplanting these subject trees, if possible, is an important goal of the City of Santa Monica. However, the City of Santa Monica understands that each tree has its own unique settings and health and vigor that may dictate whether a tree may be a candidate for transplanting.

The mobile home park has a varied collection of trees, some naturally occurring volunteers, some have been procured and planted by the residents. Therefore, each tree must be evaluated based on its individual merit, which includes its specie, age, size, health, vigor, overall structure, tolerance of root pruning and transplanting, costs associated with those activities, and the future success of any transplanting.

As the city replaces some of the mobile home units, this will be an optimal time to evaluate these trees and ensure that the future inventory of trees are ones that will complement and benefit this park for many years to come.

ASSIGNMENT

The City of Santa Monica has asked that the following be evaluated:

- The health and vigor of the subject trees
- Feasibility of transplanting
- Appraisal Value of each tree

LIMITS OF ASSIGNMENT

This report is based on my site visit. Visual Tree Assessments (VTA) were performed on the trees using ground level visual observations and non-invasive techniques. No climbing of trees was performed. Nor was any formal hazard inspection performed on these trees. No digging or root crown excavation was performed.

TREE CHARACTERISTICS AND SITE CONDITIONS

Each tree is numbered and included in the “Tree Inventory Summary”. This summary includes detailed information with respect to location, condition, species and recommendations.

There are (3) Weeping Fig trees (*Ficus benjamina*), and (1) Italian Stone Pine (*Pinus pinea*).

These subject trees are planted near the front of their respective mobile home units.

The mobile home park is located approximately 2.5 miles from coast, and is affected by a slight coastal influence. The soil is mostly loamy-clayey and the park has a flat grade throughout. The Santa Monica freeway is in close proximity and would provide additional pollution to any tree species that would grow in this area. It is important that any future tree species be tolerant of these challenging growing conditions.

Ficus benjamina (between Units #49-50)

- This tree has an approximate 8” DBH (Diameter at Breast Height).
- The tree has outgrown its plastic grow container and is now rooted into the native soil.
- The poor rooting and lack of trunk flare will always compromise the long-term stability of this tree as it matures.
- If the plastic grow container were removed, the tree would still have a portion of its trunk above grade and compromise the required stability of this broad canopied tree.
- The visible root system appears to have been deflected by the combination of the plastic grow container and the adjacent cement walkway/patio. This has further reduced the quality of the root system and the overall quality of this tree as a possible transplant candidate.
- A new tree in the 15-gallon size container (which is the current pot size) would cost less than \$100 from a nursery. If a new tree were purchased that was comparable in size to the current tree, it would cost approximately \$900 for the tree and installation.
- Transplanting costs and replacement are higher, I highly recommend this tree for removal.

- This tree is an extremely poor candidate for transplanting and the root pruning required to box up the tree would further damage the already compromised root system.
- See photos at end of report.

Ficus benjamina (Unit #66)

- This tree has three small trunks emanating from the base.
- It has an approximate total 8" DBH (Diameter at Breast Height).
- This tree appears to have been originally growing in a small container where the roots became girdled, yet it was eventually planted into the ground.
- The lack of a proper root flare, due to the extended time in the grow container, has encouraged the root system to grow downward and in a spiraling direction, instead of a natural flare, that will provide structural support when the tree matures.
- When the tree is young and juvenile, as in this case, the poor root system is not as problematic. But, as the tree matures, this unstable root system may cause the tree to fail at the root plate, or cause additional stress to the tree as the roots ultimately strangle the main trunk and cause die-back.
- In addition to the extremely poor root system, the upper canopy shows extensive die-back from previous topping pruning.
- A new tree in the 15-gallon size container would cost less than \$100 from a nursery. If a new tree were purchased that was comparable in size to the current tree, it would cost approximately \$300 for the tree and installation.
- This tree is an extremely poor candidate for transplanting and the root pruning required to box up the tree would further damage the already compromised root system.
- This tree is highly recommended for removal. This will allow installation of a new tree with more appropriate rooting and quality of canopy structure in a more suitable location.
- See photos at end of report.

Ficus benjamina (Unit #68)

- This tree has an approximate 6.5" DBH (Diameter at Breast Height).
- This tree is in relative good health and vigor. It appears that the tree was planted appropriately, allowing the root system to properly expand.
- There is mulch placed below the tree, improving the soil condition and encouraging the trees health and vigor.
- This tree may be a more tolerant candidate for transplanting. Any transplanting should retain as much of the root system as possible to increase the potential for survival. Some transplanting guidelines are included in this report.
- The cost of a new tree in a 36" Box size, which would be similar in size to the current tree, would be approximately \$750.

- Transplanting costs would be higher. The decision to retain this tree and transplant, or to remove the tree and replace may be determined by factors beyond the scope of this report.
- See photos below.

Italian Stone Pine (*Pinus pinea*) (Unit #66)

- This tree has an approximate 14" DBH (Diameter at Breast Height).
- This juvenile Stone Pine appears to have grown as a volunteer in this location.
- As the tree has grown, its root system is now in conflict with the adjacent concrete sidewalk. This has contributed to a slight lean in the trunk.
- Additionally, there is a large surface tension root on one side of the tree, which has created uneven rooting and may be a result of the lean in the tree.
- The canopy of the tree appears healthy and vigorous, as this tree is still juvenile and is not yet impacted by its growing environment, or any unforeseen rooting conditions that could potentially encourage root plate failure in the future.
- The size of this Stone Pine would not be readily available at any nurseries, therefore a more formal appraisal value of tree is provided here.
- Utilizing the Replacement Cost Method, and "Guide for Plant Appraisal, 9th Edition", this Italian Stone Pine is appraised at \$2,820.00
- This is based on the species rating of 90%, a condition rating of 75% due to the poor root system and slight lean, and a location rating of 60%, due to the site, contribution and placement of the tree.
- Although this tree has a uniform canopy, with good needle color, canopy coverage and scaffolding limbs, the compromised root system makes it a poor candidate for transplanting.
- Additionally, pine trees can be more sensitive to the root pruning required for transplanting, thus reducing their transplant survival rate.
- I recommend this tree be replaced with a more quality standard nursery specimen.

Mexican Fan Palm (*Washingtonia robusta*) (Unit #37)

- This tree is over 60 feet tall and is located in the furthest corner of the mobile home park.
- This specie of palm is readily found throughout Southern California. However it is not commonly planted due to its lack of trapping air pollution or providing shade, and other maintenance reasons.
- It is not feasible to transplant this palm due to the challenging location and lack of access for the required equipment to support a palm of this height.

- I recommend this palm be removed and replaced with a more appropriate specie.

APPRAISED VALUE compared to RELOCATION COSTS

Unit #	Specie	Condition	Appraised Value	Relocation Costs
#49/50	Ficus benjamina	Poor/Girdled Roots	\$900.00	\$3,800.00
#66	Ficus benjamina	Poor/Canopy dieback	\$300.00	\$800.00
#68	Ficus benjamina	Fair/Good	\$750.00	\$2,200.00
#36	Stone Pine	Fair/Girdled Roots	\$2,820.00	\$11,500.00
#37	W. robusta Palm	Fair/Good		Not feasible
			Relocation Costs =	\$18,000.00

Based on the comparison of current appraised values and the relocation costs, it is a much more cost effective and prudent use of funds to replace these trees with new trees that can be installed in appropriate locations within the park and mature for many years to come.

Should you have further questions regarding this information, please feel free to contact me at (310) 663-2290.

Respectfully submitted,

Lisa Smith
Registered Consulting Arborist #464
ISA Certified Arborist #WE3782
PNW-ISA Certified Tree Risk Assessor #482
Member of American Society of Consulting Arborists

Assumptions and Limiting Conditions

No warranty is made, expressed or implied, that problems or deficiencies of the trees or the property will not occur in the future, from any cause. The Consultant shall not be responsible for damages or injuries caused by any tree defects, and assumes no responsibility for the correction of defects or tree related problems.

The owner of the trees may choose to accept or disregard the recommendations of the Consultant, or seek additional advice to determine if a tree meets the owner's risk abatement standards.

The Consulting Arborist has no past, present or future interest in the removal or retaining of any tree. Opinions contained herein are the independent and objective judgments of the consultant relating to circumstances and observations made on the subject site.

The recommendations contained in this report are the opinions of the Consulting Arborist at the time of inspection. These opinions are based on the knowledge, experience, and education of the Consultant. The field inspection was a visual, grade level tree assessment.

The Consulting Arborist shall not be required to give testimony, perform site monitoring, provide further documentation, be deposed, or to attend any meeting without subsequent contractual arrangements for this additional employment, including payment of additional fees for such services as described by the Consultant.

The Consultant assumes no responsibility for verification of ownership or locations of property lines, or for results of any actions or recommendations based on inaccurate information.

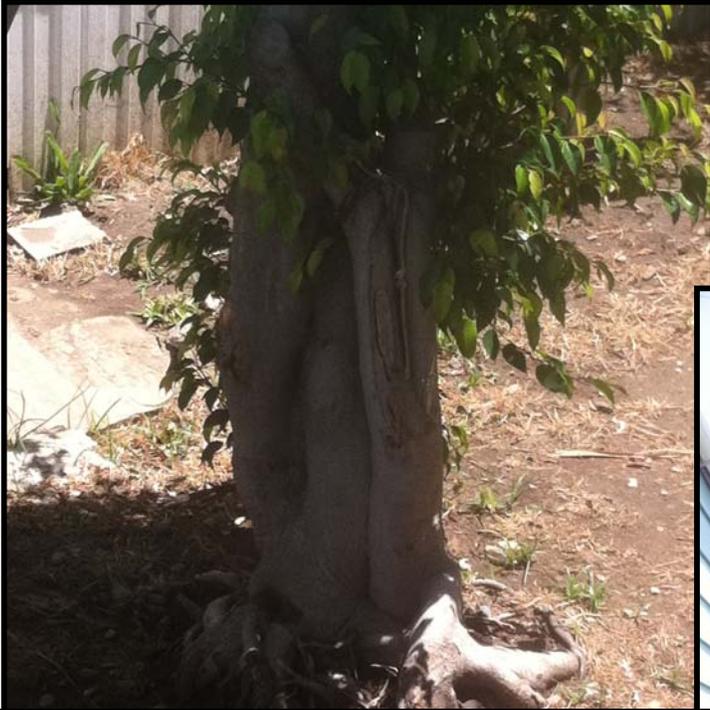
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UNIT #49-50

Ficus benjamina tree located in front of these units is a poor candidate for transplanting due to its current growing conditions. The tree has outgrown its plastic nursery container and is now girdled. The trees root system will not provide the needed structural support as it matures.





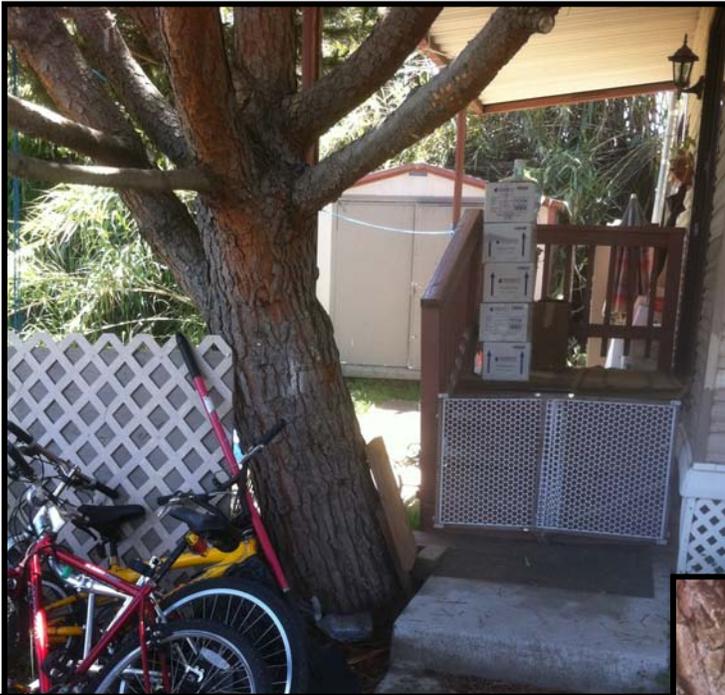
UNIT #66

Ficus benjamina tree with poor root structure from extended time in grow container. Also canopy has been topped in past, causing decay in canopy and some twig-dieback.



UNIT #68

Ficus benjamina tree
This tree has a more appropriate trunk and root flare, indicating it may have been planted appropriately. The canopy appears mostly uniform and healthy. Although transplanting may be an option, the costs associated may be much more than installation of a new tree.



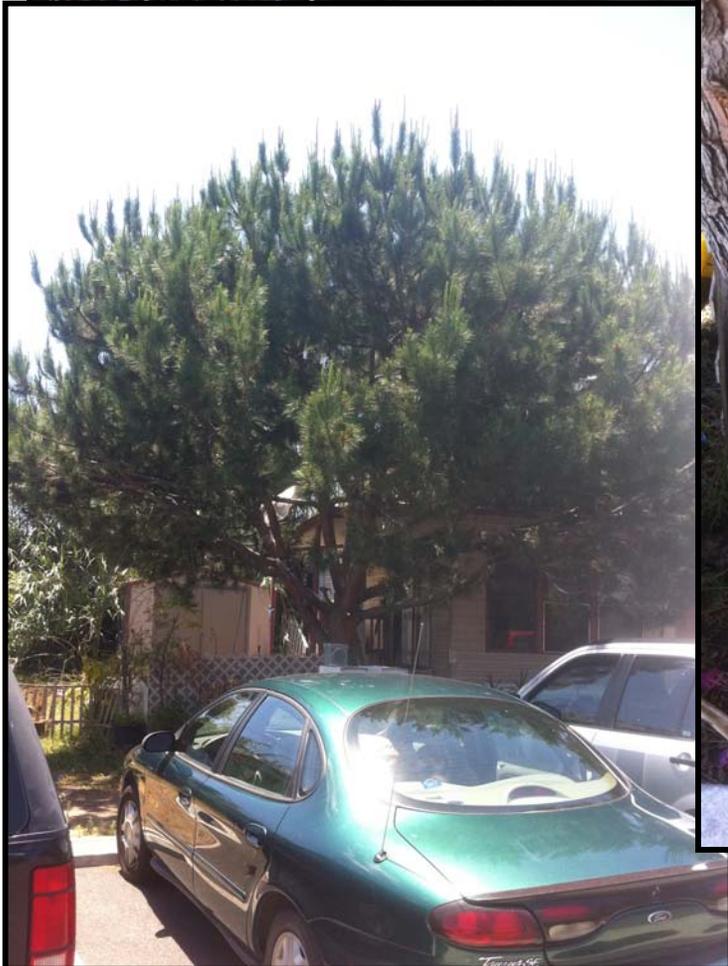
UNIT #36

Italian Stone Pine

This tree has a slight lean and is poorly rooted. The tree may not be tolerant of the required root pruning to transplant this juvenile/semi-mature pine tree.

Note in photo below the large surface root on the right side of the trunk flare.

This tension root may be a result of the lean or adapting to a potential girdling root that is below grade level.





UNIT #37

Washingtonia robusta - This Palm is located in the rear corner of the mobile home park. There is limited access in this last cul de sac. The height of this palm would require extremely large equipment to adequately support its length. It is not feasible to transplant this palm.