



Information Item

Date: March 20, 2012

To: Mayor and City Council

From: Karen Ginsberg, Director of Community and Cultural Services
Kathryn Vernez, Deputy City Manager - Special Projects

Subject: City Owned Trees Impacted by Exposition Light Rail Project

Introduction

This information item provides an update on the number of City-owned trees proposed for relocation, removal, and replacement due to Exposition Light Rail Line construction in Santa Monica.

Background

Phase II of the Exposition Light Rail Project, from Culver City to Santa Monica, includes construction on Colorado Avenue including relocation of the curb on the south side of the street between 4th Street and 17th Street and impacts adjacent to the Metro right-of-way between 17th Street and Centinela Avenue. Trees located on City property within these areas will be impacted by the construction and studies have determined the number of trees to be relocated, removed, and replaced. The Exposition Metro Line Construction Authority (Authority) will provide a two-for-one replacement for any City tree that is not relocated and must be removed.

Discussion

A comprehensive process was used to determine the number of trees impacted by construction and their candidacy for relocation. The study area included Colorado Avenue from 4th Street to 17th Street Court, and the corridor adjacent to the Metro right-of-way between 17th Street and Centinela Avenue.

The Authority hired a certified arborist to identify and evaluate the health and structural condition of each tree. Separately, the City hired two independent certified arborists to independently evaluate the health and structural condition of each tree. Each tree was assessed to determine its overall health, structural characteristics, appraised value, and its ability to thrive if relocated, in order to determine which trees would be suitable for relocation. Through these studies, 188 trees were identified as being potentially impacted. This number has been reduced to 139 trees through design modifications of the rail line which will allow for 49 trees to remain in place. Once the studies were completed, a team of City and Authority staff reviewed the work products of all of the arborists to reconcile the recommendations. Based on the recommendations contained in the studies, the team also conducted a field survey of all trees identified for removal and relocation which led to the following disposition of the 139 impacted trees.

- 19 trees to be relocated
- 120 trees to be removed

The trees to be relocated would fill vacancies on streets with similar species and be planted within parks. The trees to be removed did not meet one or more of the evaluation criteria due to their poor viability, inability to tolerate relocation, or excessively high relocation costs associated with work that would be required on utilities, buildings, or hardscape around the current tree sites.

The City requires that two trees be planted for each tree removed; therefore, 240 replacement trees would be given to the City to be planted on City property once the project is complete. As many of the replacement trees as possible would be planted along Colorado Avenue and Olympic Boulevard. The remainder would be planted throughout the City, including locations such as the planned buffer zone adjacent to the planned Expo Phase 2 Maintenance Facility. Overall, this will result in a net gain of 120 trees to the city's urban forest.

The Exposition Construction Authority will have a community meeting regarding the landscaping elements proposed for the Expo Line in Santa Monica. The community will have an opportunity to learn about the tree relocation and replacement plan, among other items, and provide input and feedback. The meeting will take place Wednesday, March 28 from 6:30p.m. to 7:30p.m.at the Virginia Avenue Park Thelma Terry Building located at 2200 Virginia Avenue in Santa Monica.

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