

2008 Citywide Tree Plan Enhancements

(Malcolm Matthews, Parks & Recreation)

SUMMARY:

An ordinance to enhance the Citywide Tree Plan, establishes a Citywide Street Tree Planting Initiative and continues the Parks Tree Planting Program which will facilitate the planting of approximately 1,200 new trees, and amends the appropriate budget.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

The Tree Mitigation Fund was established to allow for the payment of fees in lieu of preservation or reforestation during development. The Tree Mitigation Fund is utilized to pay for the Citywide Tree Program which includes public education activities, tree planting, maintenance, and preservation programs. This effort will facilitate the planting of approximately 3,500 trees.

Staff has developed a strategy to enhance the Citywide Tree Plan. The following program and new initiative will provide for an additional 1,200 trees.

Parks Tree Planting Program (800 trees)

This enhanced program, implemented in 2007, will allow the City to plant an additional 800 new trees within each City Council District to increase the current tree canopy in all City parks. Funds will also be used to help establish a tree nursery at the new Parks and Recreation Operations Headquarters. Over 800 trees were planted in Year 1 of the program and tree canopy maintenance was completed on 50 trees.

Citywide Street Tree Planting Initiative (400 trees)

This pilot program will initiate street tree plantings in public rights-of-way, to include installation and an initial maintenance period. The initiative will plant 400 large trees along highly developed corridors to clean the air, provide cooler temperatures, reduce the mowing footprint, decrease stormwater and pollutants, and beautify public streets. The selected corridors for these projects have been impacted by tree canopy removal; have a declining canopy; are over the Edwards Aquifer Recharge Zone; and/or have sufficient space within the public right-of-way to safely accommodate new trees.

Staff initially proposed three project sites to include: 1) Potranco Road (Districts 4, 6); 2) Vance Jackson Road (District 8), and 3) Lone Star Boulevard (District 4) corridors. During the January 22, 2008 Quality of Life Committee meeting, a motion was approved to recommend the development of an additional project within Districts 1 and 5. Staff will be working with Council Districts 1 and 5 to develop the project and identify the corridor by February 28, 2008. Each of these 4 projects will include the planting of 100 trees in areas selected in close coordination with Council Districts.

This ordinance was coordinated with the Development Services Department, the City Arborist, City Forester, and the Open Space Committee. Based on a Council Consideration Request (CCR) initiated by Councilwoman Diane G. Cibrian, Council District 8, this amendment and associated programs were presented to the Governance Committee on January 16, 2008. The Committee's recommendation was that this item be presented to the Quality of Life Council Committee on January 22, 2008 and then scheduled for City Council consideration on January 31, 2008.

ISSUE:

Protecting and increasing the tree canopy provides the following community benefits:

- Increases infiltration in permeable land areas essential to storm water management
- Mitigates air, dust, noise, heat and chemical pollution and reduces soil erosion

- Reduces the "heat island" effect of impervious surfaces
- Provides a landscape and sound buffer that promotes, pedestrian friendly streetscapes

The FY08 annual budget process appropriated \$901,544 from the Tree Mitigation Fund to establish the Tree Mitigation Budget and provides for the following programs, initiatives, and activities within the Citywide Tree Program. These efforts will facilitate the planting of approximately 3,500 trees this year:

- Neighborhood and Commercial Tree Challenge Programs. These Programs allow residents, neighborhood associations, and non-profits to plant and care for trees. Over 400 trees will be planted in FY08.
- VIA Bus Stop Initiative. This new initiative will allow volunteers to plant and VIA to maintain trees at bus stops in each council district, with 110 trees being planted in FY08.
- Downtown Tree Planting Program. This new initiative will plant 250 trees in the Downtown Central Business District in FY08.
- Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) Initiative. This program funds the acquisition of 1,200 trees for TxDOT to plant and maintain these trees at the intersection of IH-10/Loop 410.
- Community Tree Planting Outreach. This new initiative supports educational and outreach programs, and includes the distribution of 1,100 one-gallon trees, at no cost to community members. All recipients receive proper planting and maintenance instructions along with information about the particular species received.
- Afforestation Program. This program will plant 300 trees in areas to increase ecological function, increase tree canopy, and reduce stormwater runoff and erosion.

With this action, the Parks and Recreation Department will take the lead in the implementation of the City's tree canopy programs. The Development Services Department will continue to concentrate on the regulatory authority and enforcement of the Unified Development Code for commercial and residential development. The Parks and Recreation Department will focus on managing a healthy, safe, and biologically diverse urban forest for the City.

ALTERNATIVES:

Protecting and increasing the City's tree canopy reduces erosion, improves stormwater management, mitigates pollution, and provides many other benefits. The Tree Mitigation Fund was established and is utilized to pay for tree planting, preservation, and maintenance programs. The Citywide Street Tree Planting Initiative and the Parks Tree Planting Program supports the City's goals of tree preservation and enhancement. If the amendment is not approved, the tree canopy will not be increased, and the increased benefits to storm water, air quality, and water quality will not be achieved.

FISCAL IMPACT:

Funds in the amount of \$600,000.00 are available in the Tree Mitigation Fund. Approval of this ordinance amends the Tree Mitigation Fund and appropriates funds in the amount of \$600,000.00 to be payable as follows:

\$468,000.00	Fees to Professional Contractors
\$10,000.00	Rental of Equipment
\$76,000.00	Botanical and Agricultural Supplies
\$6,000.00	Tools and Equipment
\$40,000.00	Maintenance & Repairs

RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends approval of this ordinance amending the Tree Mitigation Budget and authorizing the appropriation of \$600,000.00 from the Tree Mitigation Fund to establish a Citywide Street Tree Planting Initiative and continue the Parks Tree Planting Program.

[Prez Message: Above are the agenda notes for City Council Agenda Item #31 on January 31, 2008. This item passed unanimously. One of the first projects will be planting 100 trees in the median along Vance Jackson between Woodstone Street and UTSA Boulevard.]