



PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION AGENDA REPORT

MEETING DATE: JUNE 28, 2006

ITEM NUMBER:

SUBJECT: PLANT PALETTE ENHANCEMENT – MESA VERDE DRIVE EAST AND WEST AND PROCEDURAL CHANGES TO THE STREETScape AND MEDIAN DEVELOPMENT STANDARDS AMENDMENT PROCESS

DATE: JUNE 15, 2006

FROM: PUBLIC SERVICES DEPARTMENT

PRESENTATION BY: BRUCE A. HARTLEY, MAINTENANCE SERVICES MANAGER

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: BRUCE A. HARTLEY, (714) 754-5123

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS:

1. Approve the change in planting palette for Mesa Verde Drive East and West, designating a Camphor Tree as an additional Primary Median tree, and designating Crown of Gold Tree and Purple Orchid Tree as Median Accent trees; recommending to the City Council that the Streetscape and Median Development Standards be amended to reflect the change.
2. Recommend to the City Council that the Parks and Recreation Commission be authorized to approve amendments to the Streetscape and Median Development Standards without further City Council action.

BACKGROUND

Mesa Verde Drive Plant Palette: The proposed changes to the planting palette for Mesa Verde Drive East and West reflects a request made by a Commissioner for staff to evaluate the success of the current tree species and make recommendations of additional tree species to beautify the suburban streetscape along the secondary arterial with an enhanced planting palette of trees. The existing street tree species for Mesa Verde Drive East and West are Canary Island Pine and London Plane trees. The median tree is London Plane tree. The Standards do not currently designate any Median Accent Trees.

Amendments to the Streetscape and Median Development Standards (SMDS): Currently, all proposed amendments to the Streetscape and Median Development Standards (Standards) are first considered by the Parks and Recreation Commission and if approved, are forwarded to the City Council for consideration and adoption. It is estimated that twelve (12) changes have been made to the SMDS in the past five (5) years, all requiring City Council action. Due to frequent changes to planting palettes, arterial wall programs or tree removal processes contained in the Standards, staff is proposing to eliminate the requirement for the City Council to consider amendments. By authorizing the Commission to consider and approve all amendments to the Standards, the process could be simplified and not add to the full agenda of the Council.

ANALYSIS

Mesa Verde Drive Plant Palette: The Canary Island Pine trees are planted only in parkways along the arterial, with the London Plane trees planted solely on the medians. The Canary Island Pines grow very well and have created a corridor of large, evergreen trees lining the roadway. The London Plane trees have not performed as well. Due to the high relative humidity caused by the close proximity to the ocean and the Santa Ana River, the London Plane trees are infected annually by a fungal disease called Anthracnose. Although there is no cure for the disease, properly timed fertilization and repeated applications of fungicide may offer some relief. This is a costly program as has not been applied to these trees with any success in the past. The visual impact is a noticeable curling and graying of leaves, leading to twig and branch die-back. As a result of repeated attacks by the fungus, the trees do not thrive and develop as well as similar species planted in other parts of Costa Mesa with less coastal influence.

The addition of a **Primary Median** Tree species and one or more **Median Accent** Trees would enhance the visual impact of the arterial streetscape in the Mesa Verde area. Adding colorful accent trees to the palette would increase the diversity and color along the corridor. The addition of a new Primary Median tree would allow for a long-term replanting program to begin, where over time the new tree species would become established, and the diseased London Plane trees could be phased out. A table of the current and proposed planting palette (tree species only) for Mesa Verde Drive East and West - Harbor Boulevard to Adams Avenue/Placentia Avenue is shown in Attachment 2. Photographs of the proposed trees are included in Attachment 3.

It is recommended that a Camphor tree be selected as an additional Primary Median Tree. It is also recommended that the following two species be selected as Median Accent Trees: Crown of Gold Tree and Purple Orchid Tree.

Amendments to the Streetscape and Median Development Standards: The Standards provide policy and direction on many aspects of median development and management of trees and other public right-of-way improvements. Frequently, changes are proposed to update or modify the Standards. Each recommended change requires consideration and approval of the Parks and Recreation Commission, with final approval and the adoption of a resolution by the City Council. This process may take several months and requires a significant investment of time by the Council, Commission and staff. In an effort to streamline this process and expedite the process of amending the Standards, staff is recommending that the Commission request Council authorization to become the final step in the approval process necessary to amend the Standards, similar to the action taken to revise the tree removal authorization process, where Commission is the final authority.

ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED

Mesa Verde Drive Plant Palette:

1. The Commission could approve alternative tree species to those suggested by staff and recommend to the City Council that the Streetscape and Median Development Standards be amended to reflect the change in planting palette.
2. The Commission could deny the request to change the planting palette.

Final Approval of Streetscape and Median Development Standards:

1. The Commission could deny the request to amend the Standards requesting Council action to allow the Parks and Recreation Commission to be authorized to approve amendments to the Streetscape and Median Development Standards without further City Council action.

FISCAL REVIEW

Mesa Verde Drive Plant Palette - There would be no immediate fiscal impact as a result of the proposed change of planting palette for Mesa Verde Drive East and West.

Final Approval of Streetscape and Median Development Standards - There would be some undetermined cost savings if the City Council authorized the Parks and Recreation Commission to be the final approval authority for changes to the Standards, due to reduced staff hours necessary to prepare and present items to the City Council.

LEGAL REVIEW

No legal review is required for this item.

CONCLUSION

It is recommended that the Commission approve the proposed change in planting palette for Mesa Verde Drive East and West, designating the Camphor Tree as an additional Primary Median Tree and designating Crown of Gold Tree and Purple Orchid Tree as Median Accent Trees; and recommend to the City Council that the Streetscape and Median Development Standards be amended to reflect the change.

BRUCE A. HARTLEY
Maintenance Services Manager

- ATTACHMENTS:
1. [Excerpts from the Streetscape and Median Development Standards – Exhibit H: Planting Palette for Secondary Arterials](#)
 2. [Table of Proposed Enhancements to Existing Plant Palette](#)
 3. [Photographs of Current and Proposed Trees](#)

C: Development Services Director
Public Services Director