



PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION AGENDA REPORT

MEETING DATE: APRIL 24, 2014

ITEM NUMBER: NB-C

SUBJECT: TREE REMOVAL REQUEST - 259 PRINCETON DRIVE

DATE: APRIL 12, 2014

FROM: PUBLIC SERVICES DEPARTMENT, MAINTENANCE SERVICES DIVISION

PRESENTATION BY: BRUCE A. HARTLEY, MAINTENANCE SERVICES MANAGER

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

RECOMMENDATION

Deny the request for the removal of one (1) City-owned parkway tree located in the public right-of-way in front of 259 Princeton Drive.

BACKGROUND

The Maintenance Services Division was contacted on March 12, 2014, by the property owner of 259 Princeton Drive, requesting removal of the parkway tree located in front of the 259 Princeton Drive because the roots have broken a sprinkler line in the parkway.

ANALYSIS

The City Arborist conducted a site inspection on March 12, 2014. The parkway tree being considered for removal is an American Sweet Gum, *Liquidambar styraciflua*, growing in the front of the property. The Arborist found the tree to be in good condition. The tree measures approximately forty feet (40') in height with a trunk diameter of eleven inches (11"). The tree is growing in a five and one half foot (5.5') wide parkway adjacent to a four foot (4') wide sidewalk. The tree appears to have been root pruned in the past. However, there is no record of root pruning in the City's tree maintenance database. The Arborist observed that raised areas of the sidewalk have been ramped and shaved in the past; no current trip hazard exists. It did not appear that the sidewalk was continuing to lift.

The turf growing in the parkway is in very poor condition. This may be attributable to damaged irrigation lines that the Applicant believes is due to tree roots. Repairing or replacing irrigation lines is a common practice and typically becomes necessary when large parkway trees begin to mature. It is not a basis for removing the parkway tree.

The tree has been pruned on a 3-4 year trimming cycle and was pruned last on January 22, 2013. See Attachment 2.

The tree does not meet the criteria for a staff level authorization for removal (Category 1 or 2 removal criteria), as stated in the Streetscape and Median Development Standards. The Applicant was informed of that decision and was provided the removal criteria. The

City Arborist evaluated the tree for possible relocation, but believes that due to the size and cost of relocating the tree, relocation is not recommended.

The City received a letter from the Applicant dated March 14, 2014, citing his concerns with the tree. See Attachment 1. The Applicant's letter provided the following reasons for the removal request:

- The roots have caused significant uplifting of the walkway posing a tripping hazard to those who walk, run, and skateboard.
- The City trimmed the roots under the sidewalk without any improvement in the sidewalk damage.
- The tree produces an abundance of golf-ball size seed pods, which present a dangerous slipping hazard.
- The roots have encroached upon the sprinkler pipes to the point of actually breaking them.
- The roots have risen above ground level creating a significant danger when mowing the area.

The Applicant is requesting that the American Sweetgum tree in front of the residence be removed. The Applicant has been notified of the Parks and Recreation Commission meeting and has been sent a copy of this staff report.

ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED

1. The Commission could authorize the removal of the tree as a Category 3 – Discretionary Removal, with the Applicant paying the cost for removal and the 3:1 replacement costs. One 24” box-size Magnolia ‘Samuel Sommer’ would be replanted at the location and two 15 gallon size trees would be planted elsewhere on public property.
2. The Commission could authorize the removal of the tree as a Category 1 – Health and Safety Removal. The City would pay all removal and replacement costs.

FISCAL REVIEW

There would be no fiscal impact to the City if the request to remove the tree was either denied or approved as a Category 3 - Discretionary Removal, as the Applicant would pay all costs.

If approved as a Discretionary Removal, where the Applicant pays the removal and replacement costs, the cost for removing the tree would be \$336. The cost for the required three-to-one replacement (mitigation) trees would be \$425; for a total cost of \$761. Costs are based on current City contract prices.

If approved as a Category 1 – Health and Safety Removal, the estimated costs to the City to remove the tree would be \$336; a replacement 24” box-size tree would cost \$225, for a total cost of \$561.

LEGAL REVIEW

No legal review is required for this item.

CONCLUSION

The City-owned street tree that is being requested to be removed is located within the public right-of-way in front of 259 Princeton Drive. The Applicant is requesting removal of the tree because the roots are lifting the walkway, the seed pods pose a slipping hazard and the roots have broken the sprinkler pipes. Staff observed that the sidewalk is safe, the irrigation system could be repaired or replaced and that since the tree is healthy and in good condition the request did not meet the criteria for removal as stated in the Streetscape and Median Development Standards (Standards). Therefore, it is recommended that the Commission deny the request to remove the tree.


BRUCE A. HARTLEY
Maintenance Services Manager


ERNESTO MUNOZ
Public Services Director

ATTACHMENTS: 1. Letter from Applicant.
2. Tree Information and Photographs.

C: Don and Claire Wolf
259 Princeton Drive
Costa Mesa, CA 92626

Don and Claire Wulf
259 Princeton Drive
Costa Mesa, CA 92626
[REDACTED]

March 14, 2014

Bruce Hartley
Maintenance Services Manager
P.O. Box 1200
Costa Mesa, CA 92628-1200

Dear Mr. Hartley,

While trees are a beautiful addition to our neighborhood, the one planted in the parkway in front of our home has become a serious safety hazard to those using the sidewalk. The roots have caused significant uplifting of the walkway posing a tripping hazard to those who walk, run, and skateboard. Several years ago, the city trimmed the roots under the sidewalk without any improvement in the sidewalk damage.

In addition, the tree produces an abundance of spherical, golf-ball-size seed pods which, when caught underfoot, present a dangerous slipping hazard. It is just a matter of time until someone slips, trips, turns an ankle, or is otherwise injured. The tree has become a liability to our city.

The tree has posed further problems as well. Its roots have encroached upon the sprinkler pipes to the point of actually breaking them. We can supply video proof of this damage if that is helpful. Also, the roots have risen well above ground level creating a significant danger when mowing the area.

Thank you for your prompt attention to this matter. We look forward to hearing from you as to what the next steps are in resolving this issue.

Sincerely,



Donald R. Wulf
Homeowner

City of Costa Mesa
Maintenance Services Division
FIELD INSPECTION – TREE INFORMATION

ATTACHMENT #2

Date Request Received: 3-17-2014
Name of Resident: Donald Wulf Requesting Party: _____
Address: 259 Princeton Drive Address: _____
Home Phone: _____ Home Phone: _____
Work Phone: _____ Work Phone: _____

Date Inspected: 3/19/2014
Inspected By: Daniel Dominguez III Interim City Arborist
Parkway Maintenance Report:

Tree Species: Liquidambar styraciflua F1 Removal Cost: (DBH x \$15.00)= \$ 165.00
Height: 40' Feet Width of Sidewalk: 4 Feet
Trunk Diameter: 11" Inches Size of Right-of-Way: 10 Feet

Health: Good Fair Poor Date of Last Pruning: 1/22/2013

Is the Tree a good candidate for Relocation? Yes No

Likelihood of survival: Good Fair Poor

Comments: **Extensive damage to sidewalk, curb & gutter and street would be required for boxing tree.**

Concrete Damage: Yes No

If Yes, describe damage: **Sidewalk raised and has been ramped and shaved. No trip hazard.**

Can the Tree be Root Pruned: Yes No Date: _____

Root Pruning Comments: **Tree appears to have been root pruned in the past, no record of root pruning in the database. No need to root prune.**

Date of Response to Resident: _____

Date Information Packet Mailed: _____

Photos Taken: Yes No Date Photos Taken: 3/19/2014

Photo #1: Street view looking south
Photo #2: Street view looking east
Photo #3: Street view looking west
Photo #4: Base of tree







