

August 12, 2021
Item 6

**TITLE: REVIEW THE CIVIC PARK LANDSCAPE RENOVATION PLAN AND
PROVIDE A RECOMMENDATION FOR REPLACEMENT TREES**

SUMMARY

The proposed landscape renovations at Civic Park at the corner of Main Street and Bernal Avenue will be completed as the next phase of the Downtown Transportation Corridor Improvements. The need for the renovation is predicated on the results from a November 2020 tree assessment by HortScience Bartlett Consulting regarding the health of the existing four American Elm trees at the park. The assessment identified the presence of Elm Leaf Beetle and Dutch Elm Disease (DED). The City's arborists recommend that all four trees be removed for public safety reasons and to prevent the further spread of Dutch Elm Disease.

Four large trees and two medium trees are proposed to replace the four mature Elm trees being removed. Additionally, a new picnic table will be added to the park and the Civic Park sign will be relocated closer to the Centennial Plaza, the parkway planting strip on Main Street will receive new plants, the east side of the park will be converted to flowering shrubs and groundcovers to complement the improvements for the Transportation Corridor, the irrigation system will be updated, and the turf will be replaced as necessary due to the tree removal and irrigation updates.

The Civic Park landscape renovations will be constructed to complement the Transportation Corridor improvements and in anticipation of the proposed Bernal/Sunol/First intersection improvements and are projected to cost approximately \$150,000.

RECOMMENDATION

1. Review the tree removal and landscape renovation plan.
2. Receive the staff presentation.
3. Provide recommendation on the species of replacement trees.

FINANCIAL STATEMENT

The projected cost of construction for the project as shown in the conceptual landscape renovation plan is approximately \$150,000. The City will however receive a credit for some of the costs for the overlap between the Transportation Corridor Improvements and the Civic Park Landscape Renovations.

BACKGROUND

The four American Elm (*Ulmus americana*) trees that are recommended for removal in Civic Park were likely planted when the park was initially constructed. The elms were able to weather or avoid the impacts of Dutch Elm Disease (DED) until the last few years when the trees started showing signs of DED. At first the leaves turned yellow and wilted on isolated branches on one tree, but eventually spread to all four trees.

DED is caused by a fungi commonly known as ascomycete which arrived in the USA in the 1920's from China and spread to the San Francisco Bay Area back in the 1970's. DED is spread by the elm bark beetle (*Scolytus spp.*), which emerge as adults from dead or dying trees or decaying logs already infected with the fungus. The elm bark beetle has a 1-year life cycle and typically there are two generations of beetle per year. The adult beetle goes through a period feeding on healthy elms (thus spreading DED) in spring and lays their eggs in dying elms. DED can also be spread through the roots of the tree or by contaminated pruning equipment.

The City Parks Division first noticed that the health of the four elm trees were declining back in 2019 and kept an eye on the health of the trees. By November 2020, the trees had declined to such a point that staff brought in a consulting arborist, HortScience Bartlett Consulting, to assess the trees. The assessment identified the presence of Elm Leaf Beetle and Dutch Elm Disease (DED) and recommended re-assessing the health of the trees in Spring 2021.

The City followed the recommendations of the assessment and tracked the health of the trees through Spring 2021. The trees were re-assessed at the end of Spring and the assessment identified a significant progression of DED in the elm trees. All four trees were substantially dead or dying by the time the trees were re-assessed. The City's arborists recommended that all four trees be removed for public safety reasons and to prevent the further spread of Dutch Elm Disease to other healthy Elms in the vicinity of affected trees (the elm bark beetle spreads the disease as they feed on healthy elms).

DISCUSSION

Four large trees and two medium trees are proposed to replace the four mature elm trees being removed. The medium sized trees are proposed near the Centennial Towers Plaza while the four large trees are proposed in the new planter and turf areas. A new picnic table would be located underneath the shade of the existing Box Elder tree that will remain. Additionally, the Civic Park sign will be relocated closer to the Centennial Towers Plaza, the parkway planting strip on Main Street will receive new plants, a portion of the east side of the park will be converted to flowering shrubs and groundcovers (to complement the improvements for the Transportation Corridor), the irrigation system will be updated (which is necessary due to the age of the irrigation and will also address overspray onto the Centennial Towers), and the turf will be replaced as necessary due to the tree removal and irrigation updates. The park landscape renovations are intended to be the phase that bridges the time between the completion of the Transportation Corridor improvements and construction of the Sunol/Bernal/First intersection improvements.

The City is seeking recommendations from the Parks and Recreation Commission on the tree choices to replace the four elm trees being removed. The choices are:

- Large tree: California Sycamore or Red Oak
- Medium tree: Frontier Elm or Urban Pinnacle Oak

The tree removal is expected to occur by Fall 2021 with the design work for the renovations to be completed by November. The landscape renovations are likely to occur in conjunction with the completion of the Transportation Corridor improvements and is projected to cost \$150,000.

Submitted by:

Giacomo Damonte

Giacomo Damonte
Parks Maintenance Superintendent

Attachments:

Attachment 1 – American Elm Assessment, Civic Park
Attachment 2 – Current Condition of Elm Trees, Civic Park
Attachment 3 – Landscape Renovation Plan, Civic Park