



Agenda Report

Fullerton City Council

MEETING DATE: NOVEMBER 5, 2019

TO: CITY COUNCIL / CITY MANAGER

SUBMITTED BY: KENNETH A. DOMER, CITY MANAGER

PREPARED BY: MEG McWADE, PUBLIC WORKS DIRECTOR

SUBJECT: TREE MASTER PLAN UPDATE AND REQUEST FOR DIRECTION AND FUNDING TO REMOVE HAZARDOUS TREES

SUMMARY

The Public Works Department Landscape Division is seeking approval to partner with West Coast Arborists, Inc. (WCA) to submit a CAL FIRE grant for a Tree Master Plan and tree planting plan and requesting direction and approval for funding related to hazardous tree removals.

RECOMMENDATION

1. Approve a partnership with WCA to develop a California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection grant application for the amount of \$300,000 for a Tree Master Plan and tree planting.
2. Authorize City Manager or designee to submit the CAL FIRE grant application and execute any necessary documents related thereto.
3. If grant is received, accept and appropriate the funds and authorize WCA to perform the work.
4. Provide direction on tree removals related to the following options:
 - a. Fund ALL recommended tree / stump removals in the amount of \$831,514 with work to be performed in this Fiscal Year, or
 - b. Fund removal of 166 high priority tree removals (\$216,309), fund an inspection report to determine phasing of remaining trees (\$6,000) and based on report's recommendation, perform future removals (\$615,205) – for a total project cost of \$837,514 (Staff's preferred alternative)
5. Approve a capital improvement project to carry out tree removals funded by the Liability Fund in an amount not to exceed \$837,514.

6. Authorize the Public Works Director to perform all necessary actions to remove the trees based on the direction provided.

PRIORITY POLICY STATEMENT

This item matches the following Priority Policy Statement:

- Public Safety.

FISCAL IMPACT

CAL FIRE grant – The grant request is \$300,000 with Fullerton in-kind services (Staff time on the project) serving as Fullerton's contribution. WCA will develop the grant application and perform the work.

Hazardous Tree Removal – If removal of all trees is selected, the cost for removal is \$831,514 in this fiscal year. If a phased approach for removal is approved, the total cost is slightly higher at \$837,514. The initial cost would be \$223,309 for removal of the highest priority trees and \$6,000 for an inspection report to determine future phasing of remaining trees. The remaining tree removals are currently estimated at \$615,205. As there is not adequate funding in the tree program to perform these removals, a budget adjustment would be requested from the Liability Fund.

DISCUSSION

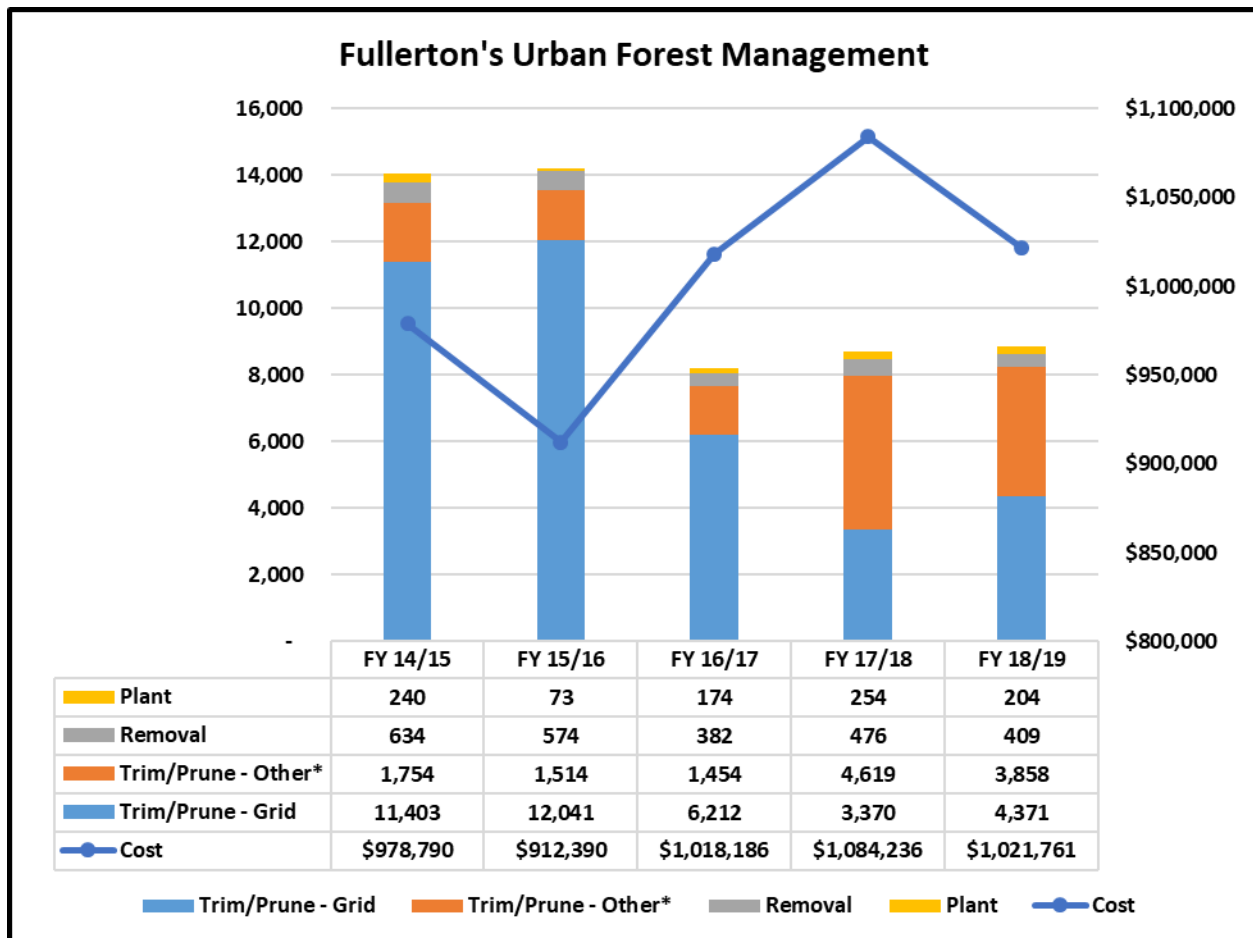
Tree Master Plan

The City of Fullerton has approximately 33,000 trees in its inventoried forest, excluding vacant sites. The City is "well known for the wealth of beautiful trees which line its streets, beautify its parks, and add charm and character to the community", excerpt from the Adopted 1998 Fullerton Community Forest Management Plan (CFMP). The City has earned the honor of Tree City USA for the past 38 years. Tree City USA is a national recognition program for sound urban forest management practices, sponsored by the Arbor Day Foundation in partnership with the U.S. Forest Service and National Association of State Foresters.

As part of the City's dedication to its urban forest, Fullerton has a Landscape Supervisor who is an International Society of Arboriculture (ISA) Certified Arborist. The credential was obtained through years of practical work experience in arboriculture, hundreds of hours of assessed professional arboriculture training, successful completion of the Certified Arborist Exam and continuing education. The City's arborist inspects the work completed by Fullerton's contractor and ensures the trimming is done effectively and safely.

Tree trimming of City-maintained trees is completed by WCA. WCA, a company established in 1972, provides professional tree maintenance and management services for over 275 municipalities in California and Arizona. ISA Certified staff serve on every crew. WCA has been the City's tree contractor since 1998, with the last contract issued in 2017 through a competitive bid process. The work is performed according to American National Standards Institute (ANSI) standards with oversight by the City's arborist.

Until the last several years, the City's ongoing tree trimming program had kept pace with the CFMP's recommendation to trim at least approximately one-quarter of its trees each year – essentially providing for a 4-year grid trim cycle. In Fiscal Year 2016-17, there was a change in State law that required payment of prevailing wages for landscape maintenance / tree trimming personnel which significantly increased costs. This increase in costs reduced the number of trees that the City was able to trim on an ongoing basis. Consequently, this reduction in ongoing grid trimming resulted in increased issues related to reduced trimming cycles. The information below relates to the historical trimming and investment in the City's tree canopy:



The City's urban forest has seen a recent decline due to budgetary restraints, drought and pests. There is a need to increase the investment in the City's urban forest. This increased investment would include trimming, tree removals (discussed later in this report) and future planting.

As the City's tree inventory continues to age, it becomes increasingly difficult to implement long-term urban forest management activities without an updated Tree Master Plan. This update is necessary to modify the tree planting palette related to "right tree, right place" planting philosophy as well as ensure diversity of canopy given resource issues. The trees planted throughout the region many years ago would not

necessarily be recommended for planting today due to infrastructure impacts, water resource limitations and long-term maintenance needs.

In order to begin addressing the need for a Tree Master Plan Update with essentially no funding, Staff began working with WCA on a partnership opportunity to obtain a CAL FIRE grant for the project. If the application is ultimately successful and the grant is awarded, WCA would perform the following as part of the project:

- Provide an updated inventory of trees (including those areas that have not been previously inventoried as noted in the following list) so there is a clear understanding of the diversity of canopy in the Urban Forest
 - Hillcrest Park
 - Hiltscher Park
 - Juanita Cooke Trail
 - Raymond Underpass
 - State College Underpass
 - Puente Trail
 - Bastanchury Connector Trail (behind saint Jude)
 - Malvern Trail (West of Gilbert)
 - Hughes Trail
 - Nora Kuttner Trail
 - Woodcrest Park
 - Placentia Ave.
 - Lemon St. from Chapman to 91 FWY
 - Sequoia Planters (Chapman/State College)
 - All Reservoirs
 - Lion's Field.
- Update the appropriate tree management documents (2001 Tree Master Plan – Attachment 1, 1998 Community Forest Management Plan – Attachment 2, and applicable Fullerton Municipal Code sections) with the updates reflecting industry best practices and updated palette.
- During the development of the Tree Master Plan and related documents, perform important community engagement to discuss “right tree, right place”, aesthetic and maintenance impacts and urban forest goals of residents and businesses.
- Plant additional trees with a particular focus of increasing the tree canopy in Disadvantaged Community areas of the City.

If the partnership with WCA is authorized, the preliminary grant application will be submitted by the November 28, 2019 deadline. If selected to continue through the

process, a more robust application will be submitted in spring 2020. The funding should be made available in mid-2020 with project implementation in FY 2020-21, if awarded.

Hazardous Trees

As mentioned earlier, the City's urban forest has begun to decline with drought, pests and age adding to the vulnerability of some of the tree canopy. As a result, the City's contractor has provided recommendations for removal of diseased, dying and structurally unsound trees. The recommendations for removal are made based on visual inspections during normal grid trimming operations and / or when the City requests a special evaluation. Based on the inventoried trees and stumps that have been reviewed, the following is the tree count and funding required to perform all recommended removals:

Removals: 829 trees / stumps

Cost: \$831,514

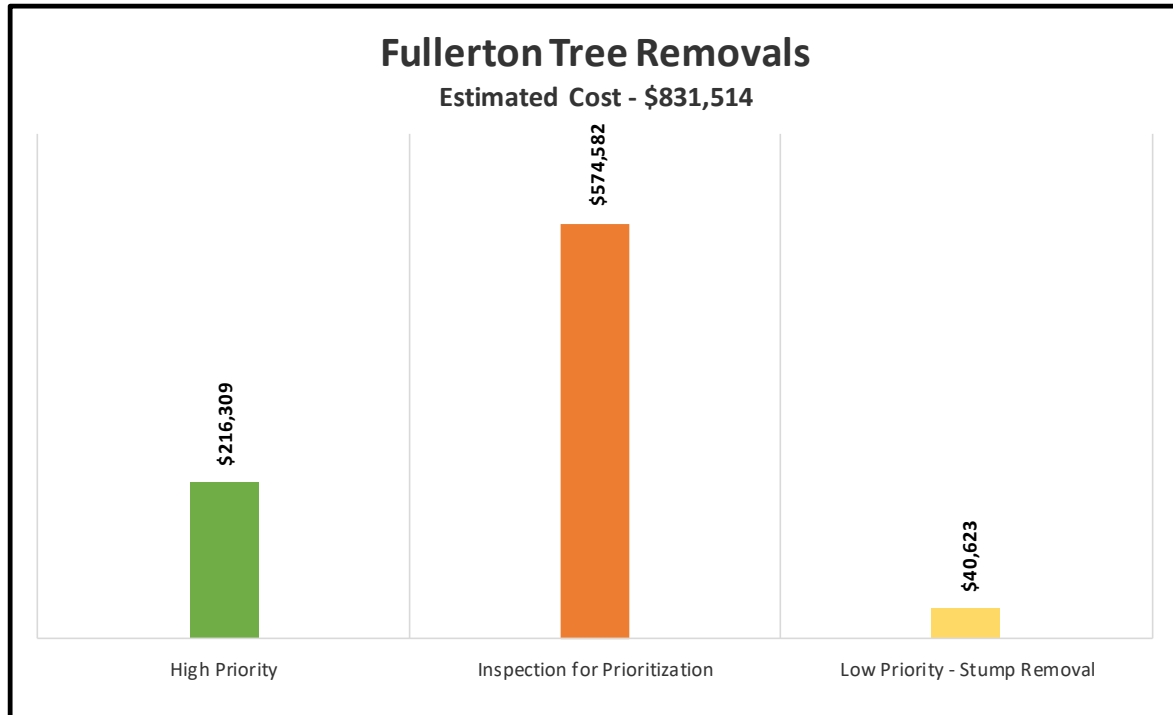
These trees are recommended for removal and the cost to perform these removals is approximately \$831,514. The City could opt to remove all of the trees. The benefit to this approach is that the City would be limiting its liability as much as possible by following the contractor's recommendation. The downside to this approach is that there are areas where many trees would be removed at once, potentially impacting residents or businesses.

In the alternative, the City could do a more phased approach with a slightly higher total cost of \$837,514. While there are 829 stumps / trees marked for removal, there are approximately 166 trees that would be recommended for immediate removal if the project were to be phased. The high priority removals are recommended based on the following categorization:

- Dead
- Diseased or dying – close to failure
- Poorly structured
- Volunteers / Spacing issues.

The approximate cost of the first phase of removals is \$216,309 and evaluation of the remaining trees to determine future phasing will cost \$6,000. This study would result in a schedule for removal of the remaining trees based on an updated condition survey. While the City would ultimately need to invest in removal of the trees (currently estimated at \$615,205), the evaluation could potentially preserve the tree canopy for a longer period of time.

The chart on the following page shows the categories High Priority (recommended for immediate removal), Medium Priority (perform an inspection for prioritization) and low priority (remove as additional funding is identified). Attachment 4 includes the maps of trees identified for removal.



The tree maintenance program does not have funding for this proposed capital improvement project and would require an additional appropriation which is proposed from the Liability Insurance Fund (Liability Fund). Staff will process the appropriate budget actions based on the direction provided. The use of the Liability Fund is recommended because the Liability Fund, an internal service fund, has a direct nexus to the issue of potential liability claims arising from tree damages. The City is self-insured and keeps a level of funding necessary to maintain a high level of confidence in our ability to pay out against potential claims.

Attachments:

- Attachment 1 – PowerPoint Presentation
- Attachment 2 – City of Fullerton – Master Street Tree Plan
- Attachment 3 – Community Forest Management Plan
- Attachment 4 – Tree Removal Priority Maps