



## **CITY OF SALINAS COUNCIL STAFF REPORT**

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**DATE:** DECEMBER 19, 2017

**DEPARTMENT:** PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT

**FROM:** MICHAEL RICKER, ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES PLANNER

**TITLE:** ARBOR DAY AND TREE CITY USA

### RECOMMENDED MOTION:

Proclaim December 21, 2017 as Arbor Day and authorize staff to apply for recertification for *Tree City USA* status.

### RECOMMENDATION:

Adoption of the proclamation that declares December 21, 2017 as Arbor Day and urges all residents to support efforts to protect our trees and woodlands, and plant trees to gladden the heart and promote the well-being of this and future generations.

### BACKGROUND:

Pounding rain and ferocious winds ripped through the City this past February toppling over a 1,000 trees. Since February, that number has climbed as Salinas has removed dozens and dozens of more trees--mainly due to root-damage to sidewalks and safety concerns. Loss of trees comes at a high price. For trees provide context to where we live and supply numerous other benefits. They beautify the city, create bird habitat, increase property values, reduce crime, slow traffic and soothe the human spirit. Further, trees are the only City infrastructure whose benefits increase over time.

With the February storm damage now behind us, the City hopes to replenish the city's forest. As a first step, Salinas will demonstrate its everlasting friendship to the people of Kushikino, Japan, and signal its commitment to replant trees lost by storm damage by celebrating Arbor Day this winter with the planting of two symbolic trees.

For twenty-three years, Salinas has proudly worn the mantel as an official *Tree City USA* city under the national Arbor Day Foundation's highly acclaimed program. Many people intuitively appreciate a tree's beauty, but few are likely aware of the many economic and health benefits trees provide. Celebrating Arbor Day is one way communities recognize the many benefits trees afford.

With the nation's economy rebounding and passage of local tax measures, City resources for forestry have slowly begun to recover. One consequence of this economic up-tick is that Salinas has been able to dedicate increased resources towards forest management. Accordingly, the Arbor

Day Foundation recognized City's actions and Salinas was re-certified as a *Tree City USA*. This is a significant achievement. While we celebrate that accomplishment, we recognize there is much more to do. For one, to maintain its *Tree City USA* status, Salinas must continue to replant and sustain its forest. The City's recently adopted *Neighborhood Vibrancy--Urban Greening Plan* provides guidance: the City goal is to achieve a tree canopy coverage of 25-30%. Presently, the City's canopy is approximately 8%. For two, Salinas must annually apply for recertification for *Tree City USA* status. Among other steps, recertification as a *Tree City USA* requires adoption of a proclamation by the City Council.

#### CEQA CONSIDERATION:

***Not a Project.** The City of Salinas has determined that the proposed action is not a project as defined by the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) (CEQA Guidelines Section 15378). In addition, CEQA Guidelines Section 15061 includes the general rule that CEQA applies only to activities which have the potential for causing a significant effect on the environment. Where it can be seen with certainty that there is no possibility that the activity in question may have a significant effect on the environment, the activity is not subject to CEQA. Because the proposed action and this matter have no potential to cause any effect on the environment, or because it falls within a category of activities excluded as projects pursuant to CEQA Guidelines section 15378, this matter is not a project. Because the matter does not cause a direct or foreseeable indirect physical change on or in the environment, this matter is not a project. Any subsequent discretionary projects resulting from this action will be assessed for CEQA applicability.*

#### STRATEGIC PLAN INITIATIVE:

Attaining *Tree City USA* certification is an acknowledgement of Salinas' commitment to replant its urban forest. Maintaining a vibrant urban forest moves Salinas forward in meeting several Council Goals: Excellent infrastructure, Safe Livable Communities, and Economic Diversity and Prosperity.

#### FISCAL AND SUSTAINABILITY IMPACT:

Cost for this item include staff time and the planting of two commemorative, replacement trees in front of the Council Rotunda. Adequate funds are available in CIP # 9105--Street to cover the cost of tree purchase and staff time. With respect to replacement of the more than 1,000 trees lost to the storm and sidewalk repair, the City will be allocating a portion of storm damage funds received from the City's insurance carrier, as well as from other sources (e.g., FEMA) for this purpose. Once Salinas receives insurance claims and obtains the means to water newly planted trees, tree planting will accelerate. City staff will return to the City Council to seek approval regarding appropriation of storm damage insurance funds.

#### ATTACHMENTS:

Proclamation