



CITY OF SALINAS COUNCIL STAFF REPORT

DATE: NOVEMBER 6, 2018

DEPARTMENT: PUBLIC WORKS

FROM: DAVID JACOB, DIRECTOR

BY: MICHAEL RICKER, ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCE PLANNER

TITLE: ADOPT-A-TREE PROGRAM AND REVISION TO STREET TREE
STANDARD PLAN

RECOMMENDED MOTION:

A motion continuing the implementation of the Adopt-A-Tree Program and approval of a revised Standard Plan for Street Trees.

RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends that the City Council adopt a resolution to continue implementation of the Adopt-A-Tree Program and approve a revised Standard Plan for Street Trees.

BACKGROUND:

Public Works' staff plant trees and contract for tree planting on behalf of the public as a normal, if infrequent, occurrence. Salinas' tree planting efforts received a boost when the City received a grant from the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CalFire). On August 15, 2017 the City Council authorized acceptance of the State's grant to plant trees and thereby authorized staff to conduct the program.

As part of the Cal-Fire Grant, street trees were selected as the highest priority as they offer the greatest number of benefits to the community. While grant funds cover purchase and planting, tree watering falls to the City. While watering might appear to be the easiest part; it is a challenge. Without the necessary equipment and staff, watering exceeds the City's capability. To address that challenge, City staff developed a stopgap solution. Staff developed a program to plant street trees called the "Adopt-A-Tree Program." This program is similar to the partnership idea embodied in the City's 50-50% Sidewalk Replacement Program though the public does not provide a monetary contribution. Rather, willing residents make a "handshake agreement" to weekly watering. Thus, residents who have agreed to water "their tree" are being considered for a free street tree. This program is the start of an effort to re-grow the city's urban forest. Much like other infrastructure, the City's green infrastructure needs periodic repair and replacement for the many benefits it provides.

During a 2017 severe winter storm, Salinas lost over 600 trees on one day alone. Sustained wind of over 75-miles per hour coupled with heavy rains toppled trees and damaged property. Since that event, hundreds of additional trees have been leveled due to conflicts with adjacent hardscape, accidental damage and trees' normal aging. This results in diminishing Salinas' tree canopy, in contrast to the City's goal.

For more than 20 years, Salinas has not had a comprehensive tree-planting program until now. Rather, the City has conducted ad-hoc replacement of individually removed trees as best it could. And while some trees have been replaced, Salinas' tree canopy trajectory has progressed in the direction of fewer, not more trees. The Adopt-A-Tree Program is a small step in a positive direction. Adoption of a resolution supporting the activity formalizes this policy.

Adoption of a revised Standard Plan for Street Trees

In parallel with the tree planting efforts of the Adopt-A-Tree program, the City has updated its Street Tree Planting and Staking Standard Plan to be consistent with current practices by the Urban Forestry Division, and to remove minor design inconsistencies, incorporate the addition of a root barrier and add a requirement for amended soil. City staff reviewed tree planting standards from neighboring cities during the revision process in order to be familiar with other adopted practices and assimilate some of their features. This Standard Plan serves as the design for typical tree planting and staking within the City. Though staff recognizes that large tree plantings should take into account all aspects of the location including soil type that can affect the long-term survival of the trees specified for a project. Thus, individual projects will still be required to examine specific elements affecting tree growth and produce a design tailored to the situation. That said, the Street Tree Planting and Staking Standard Plan 11 serves as a baseline reference for tree planting within the City. This update replaces that approved and included in the 2008 Edition of the Standard Specifications, Design Standards and Standard Plans.

CEQA CONSIDERATION:

Categorical Exemptions. The City of Salinas has determined that the project is exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines (Section 15301, Class 1 [h] and Section 15304, Class 4 [b] because the project proposes new and/or replacement gardening or landscaping with water efficient plants that excludes the use of pesticides.

STRATEGIC PLAN INITIATIVE:

Simply stated, trees improve the Quality of Life for Salinas residents. Detailed information about the benefits trees provide and why they matter is provided on the City's web site, linked below:
<https://www.cityofsalinas.org/our-city-services/public-works/water-waste-energy/neighborhood-vibrancyurban-greening/salinas-trees/why-trees-matter>

DEPARTMENTAL COORDINATION:

Public Works staff reached-out to Library and Community Services Department (“LCS”) personnel regarding this program to best integrate Public Works’ efforts with other City programs. LCS’ on-going Neighborhood Beautification Initiative is an ideal fit with the Adopt-A-Tree Program.

FISCAL AND SUSTAINABILITY IMPACT:

As referenced in the Urban Forestry Status Report provided to the City Council under separate cover, reforestation of the City’s Urban Forest is partly funded by the State California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CalFire) Prop. 84 Grant (CIP 9043), and with \$170,000 from Gas Tax (CIP (9107) and \$200,000 from insurance proceeds following the 2017 storms. The “Adopt a Tree Program” is just one of several efforts to reforest the City. Public works is working toward the reforesting of other landscapes that have irrigation systems at City Parks, in landscape districts and some street medians.

ATTACHMENTS:

Street Tree Planting and Staking - Standard Plan 11R
Resolution