

Staff Report Memo



To: Mayor and Council	From: Matt Taylor, Senior Planner
Date: June 16, 2020	
Re: Trees and Park Strip Landscaping Ordinance	
Meeting Requested: Business Meeting <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Work Session <input type="checkbox"/> Other <input type="checkbox"/> _____	
Public Hearing Needed?	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Undetermined <input type="checkbox"/>
CM Approval or Denial	Denied <input type="checkbox"/> Approved <input type="checkbox"/> Continued <input type="checkbox"/> CM Signature: _____

REQUEST

A public hearing on a city-initiated ordinance to better regulate trees and landscaping in public rights of way.

BACKGROUND

In 2019, one of the City Council's priorities was the development of an ordinance to provide guidance and regulation for the planting and care of trees in Cottonwood Heights. The current city ordinance does not adequately address trees in publicly owned areas, particularly in public rights of way. Additionally, there are not tools in the ordinance that assist in the preservation of trees on private property when it develops or redevelop, nor adequate tools to assist in abatement of nuisance trees on public property. Since most public trees with the city exist in the park strip, regulations addressing park strip landscaping have also been developed to maximize tree health and achieve other City objectives.

Prior research has found that the thoughtful implementation of trees in public rights of way leads to numerous benefits for communities, including increased property values, decreased light pollution, increased air quality, natural groundwater filtration, an improved sense of pedestrian safety, increased roadway longevity, etc.

The Planning Commission held its first public hearing on the ordinance at its meeting on March 4th. The Commission continued its discussion of the ordinance on April 16 and voted unanimously to recommend approval to the City Council. Since the ordinance's introduction to the City Council on May 5, additional feedback by the Architectural Review Commission (ARC) and the Parks, Trails and Open Space Committee (PTOS) has been incorporated into the ordinance, including provisions that:

- The City Forester reviews and approves tree preservation plans and defers to the ARC when desired or requested.
- The diversification of trees is encouraged for a healthier tree ecosystem, but that key corridors are planned with a limited number of trees for aesthetic and tree canopy goals.
- Provisions related to tree height limitation under power poles are included.

The ARC and the PTOS Committee both unanimously voted to recommend approval of the ordinance.

Attachments:

- Draft Tree and Park Strip Landscaping Ordinance
- Presentations