

REDEVELOPMENT AGENCY
BOARD

HARRY S. MAVROGENES
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

SEE BELOW

AUGUST 8, 2006

INFORMATION

SUBJECT: USE OF OUR CITY FOREST FOR TREE ESTABLISHMENT SERVICES

At the February 14, 2006, Redevelopment Agency Board meeting, the Board approved amendments to two contracts with firms, West Coast Arborist and Anderson Tree Care, which specialize in the establishment and replacement of trees. Boardmember Cortese asked staff to ascertain if Our City Forest could be used to perform any of the services provided by the two tree establishment firms. Boardmember Cortese requested this information be provided when the contracts were renewed or put out for bids. Since neither contract is up for renewal until February 1, 2007, staff wanted to provide an early response to this request.

The rationale for funding tree establishment firms is that, according to professional arborists, young trees require five years of follow-up care to survive the dry extended summers characteristic of San Jose to mature into healthy and structurally sound trees. The Agency's and City's agreements with contractors who do public landscape projects typically include a one-year tree establishment period.

To protect the Agency's investment, newly planted trees (within the first five years) require weekly watering during late spring, summer, and early fall; pruning to develop a good structure; and the removal of stakes and ties once they are rooted. The Redevelopment Agency does nearly all its planting as part of streetscape projects either in median strips or in sidewalks in commercial areas. The Agency plants 24-inch box or larger trees, in addition to replacement trees that are often much larger.

West Coast Arborists and Anderson Tree Care have trained professional staff and specialized equipment and trucks that can address any situation that arises with

sidewalk trees during the five-year establishment period. The equipment includes cherry pickers, large capacity watering trucks, large chain saws, and wood chippers. The two professional firms provide: a) weekly watering from April to October for nearly 600 street trees planted within the Redevelopment Project Areas; b) removal of stakes and ties once trees are rooted; c) structural pruning by trained staff supervised by arborists to develop good structure and ensure fast and safe growth for trees; d) emergency tree and branch removal services, and; e) replacement trees, should a tree die or be damaged by vandalism or accident after the one-year tree establishment period terminates.

Agency staff met with Our City Forest (OCF) to ascertain its interest and capability to provide services similar to the work the two tree establishment firms perform. OCF has a very small paid staff that primarily assists interested San Jose citizens in planting small (15 gallon) trees throughout residential neighborhoods in the City. Our City Forest staff indicated they are interested in components of the tree establishment work but do have limitations due to the lack of specialized equipment. They currently do not have a watering truck although they indicated they may be interested in doing watering. A watering truck is essential given the great number of trees needing water during the extended summer months. OCF does not have a cherry picker or other large equipment necessary for most emergency situations involving trees or to do structural pruning to trees within the five year establishment period that are located in commercial Redevelopment Areas. OCF can only trim small trees that can be reached using a sidewalk ladder.

Therefore, given the equipment currently available, OCF can only remove tree stakes and prune small trees. If OCF staff agrees to obtain, or has obtained, the equipment necessary to do more of the tree establishment services they will be strongly considered during the next round of Request for Qualifications.

The Agency provides funding to Our City Forest through an Agreement with the Department of Transportation (DOT) for residential tree planting in the Strong Neighborhoods Initiative (SNI) Project Area. A Project Services Memorandum (PSM) was first approved in August 2003 to transfer \$45,000 from the Agency to DOT. The PSM was amended in July 2005 to add \$37,500. While all SNI neighborhoods are eligible, four neighborhoods (Blackford, K.O.N.A., Winchester and Edenvale/Great Oaks) identified tree planting on their top ten project lists and received priority. Approximately 500 trees were planted using Agency funds. The funds in this account have just been depleted and staff will prepare an amendment to the PSM to add funds this fall so that Our City Forest can continue the residential tree planting program in the Strong Neighborhoods Initiative Project Area.

Every three years the Agency prepares a Request for Qualifications (RFQ) for tree establishment services with local vendors. Our City Forest will be included in the RFQ distribution list for the next round, in early 2007.

Meetings were held with the City Arborist to confirm Agency staff findings and recommendations. The City Arborist reviewed this memo for accuracy and concurrence on the basic recommendations.

HARRY S. MAVROGENES
Executive Director