City of Long Beach
Working Together to Serve

Memorandum

NB-23

Date: July 5, 2016

To: Honorable Mayor Garcia and Members of the City Council

From: Stacy Mungo, Councilwoman, Fifth District SM
Lena Gonzalez, Councilwoman, First District LG
Roberto Uranga, Councilmember, Seventh District
Rex Richardson, Councilmember, Ninth District RR

Subject: **AGENDA ITEM: URBAN TREE CANOPY ASSESSMENT AND MANAGEMENT PLAN**

RECOMMENDATION:

Recommendation to request City Manager to direct the Department of Public Works to conduct a street tree canopy assessment, prioritization and financing study to inform the development of a street tree lifecycle management plan.

BACKGROUND

The City of Long Beach covers approximately fifty-two (52) square miles with a current population of 462,257 and has more than 112,000 parcels and more than 208,000 addresses. The City maintains approximately 92,000 street trees and 815 miles of streets.

Recently, in 2015, a park tree inventory study was conducted by West Coast Arborists, Inc. for the first time on trees in the City's parks. Approximately 7,100 trees or 27% of the 26,000 total park trees inventoried were found to be dead or in poor/critical condition, and 2,000 trees were recommended for removal.

According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Fire Service as of the beginning of this year, there are 66 million blighted trees throughout California, particularly among pine and fir trees. The USDA estimates that California's street trees comprise 10-20% of the total urban forest (which collectively refers to all publicly and privately owned trees within an urban area), or about one for every four residents, and provide $1 billion in annual environmental and social benefits. Yet, street tree density has declined by 30% since 1988 and overreliance on certain species and genera pose a threat of catastrophic loss from various stressors.

In drought-ravaged regions, especially with the state mandate for localities to reduce water use by up to 25%, urban trees go without critical watering and become more susceptible to pests ultimately causing disease or death. This is a tremendous public safety risk given downed trees and large branches that can create substantial property damage and have the ability to harm lives.

DISCUSSION

The management of urban forests typically involves a variety of activities such as inventorying tree populations; developing and implementing long-term maintenance plans; establishing annual work plans and budgets; facilitating block pruning and tracking of maintenance history; and promoting community education and participation (USDA: "Sustaining America's Urban Frees and Forests, 2010).

Today's technological advancements have made possible a variety of software tools and platforms for collecting data and information to inform the analysis of our urban tree canopy. For instance, urban forest cover can be determined from national satellite (Landsat)-based maps, high-resolution imagery and LiDAR (light detection and ranging), on-the-ground sampling data, census data, and i-Tree applications.

There are two basic ways of assessing the structure or composition of the urban forest: 1) bottom-up approach, comprised of field-based assessments to measure the physical structure, management costs, risks and needs of the forest; and 2) top-down approach, which entails assessments of canopy cover using aerial or satellite images to determine distribution of tree cover and potential planting space.

In many cities across the country, tree inventory projects, along with option sidewalk analysis components, have enabled communities to strategically target certain species of trees in certain parts of the city and implement a corresponding management program of tree removal, replacement and maintenance.

Therefore, it is respectfully requested that the City conduct a street tree canopy assessment, prioritization and financing study to inform the development of a street tree lifecycle management plan in order to address important urban forest issues such as tree density, species selection, replacement criteria, best practices and citizen involvement.

FISCAL IMPACT

The approval of the requested action is anticipated to have a fiscal impact due to the cost of the initial study and any management plan that is implemented. However, without such a plan, the City is likely to continue incurring extraordinary financial liabilities due to uprooted sidewalks, disrupted utilities, property damage and environmental degradation.

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REQUEST TO ADD AGENDA ITEM

Date: July 1, 2016

To: Maria de la Luz Garcia, City Clerk

From: Stacy Mungo, Fifth District Councilwoman

Subject: Request to Add Agenda Item to Council Agenda of ***July 5, 2016***

Pursuant to Municipal Code Section 2.03.070 [B], the City Councilmembers signing below request that the attached agenda item (due in the City Clerk Department by Friday, 12:00 Noon) be placed on the City Council agenda under New Business via the supplemental agenda.

The agenda title/recommendation for this item reads as follows:

AGENDA ITEM: URBAN TREE CANOPY ASSESSMENT AND MANAGEMENT PLAN

Recommendation to request City Manager to direct the Department of Public Works to conduct a street tree canopy assessment, prioritization and financing study to inform the development of a street tree lifecycle management plan.

Council District	Authorizing Councilmember	Signed by
5	Stacy Mungo	Stacy Mungo
9	Rex Richardson	
1	Lena Gonzalez	

cc: Office of the Mayor