



CITY OF BEVERLY HILLS STAFF REPORT

Meeting Date: May 24, 2011
To: Honorable Mayor & City Council
From: Ken Pfalzgraf-Parks and Urban Forest Manager
Subject: Angelo Drive Ficus Street Tree Master Plan
Attachments: 1. April 26, 2011 staff report to Recreation and Parks Commission

INTRODUCTION

In 1999, City Council approved Phase II of the Street Tree Master Plan of 1996. This plan was formulated to address the disruptive effects of Ficus trees on infrastructure in the City of Beverly Hills. Once touted as the perfect parkway tree for southern California, the Ficus proved to be an aggressive tree with heavy maintenance requirements and a root system that routinely and repetitively damaged infrastructure. Since the adoption of this phase of the Street Tree Master Plan, Ficus trees have been removed and replaced on Chevy Chase Drive, Durant Drive, Lasky Drive and a portion of South Santa Monica Boulevard. Phase one of a three phase plan has been completed on Olympic Boulevard. In addition, several hundred Ficus trees were removed and replaced as part of the Urban Design Project in the City's Golden Triangle.

Following on the heels of the removal and replacement of the Ficus trees on adjacent Chevy Chase Drive, the City was petitioned by some residents of the 1700 block of Angelo Drive to remove and replace the Ficus trees that currently line the south side of their street.

With the support and involvement of the Recreation and Parks Commission, staff has conducted the community outreach necessary to develop a Street Tree Master Plan phase for Angelo Drive, which is a continuation of the program approved by City Council in 1999.

The staff recommendation is based on the input of a majority of affected property owners and addresses the concerns raised in the petition while providing a more appropriate and functional tree planting for the street in the future.

DISCUSSION

The April 26, 2011 comprehensive staff report to the Recreation and Parks Commission on this subject is attached. To summarize this report:

- At present, the street tree population on the 1700 block of Angelo Drive consists of 16 *Ficus* (*Ficus microcarpa* 'Nitida') trees located in the south parkway, including one tree which is located on the Angelo side of a Chevy Chase address. There are an additional two tree sites which have remained vacant after the trees which occupied the sites were windthrown several years ago.
- In July 2010, staff received a petition from some property owners on Angelo Drive asking that the *Ficus* trees in the 1700 block of their street be removed and replaced due to the disruption their root systems have caused to both public and private property.
- All affected property owners were invited to attend the October 23, 2010 meeting of the Recreation and Parks Commission to hear a staff report on the topic. Several residents of Angelo Drive attended the meeting and encouraged the Commission to support a staff recommendation for the development of a Street Tree Master Plan which would replace *Ficus* trees on their street.
- An "on the street" meeting was held on February 2, 2011 and was attended by approximately 38% of affected property owners. Recreation and Parks Commissioners Anderson and Gold joined staff in discussing the removal and replacement of the *Ficus* trees. Since there were no objections raised by attendees regarding the removal of the *Ficus* trees, staff presented two tree types for consideration as replacement trees, the Crape Myrtle (*Lagerstroemia indica*) and Podocarpus Fern Pine (*Podocarpus gracillior*). The attendees found the trees suggested suitable and agreed that affected residents should be balloted to choose a replacement tree by majority vote.
- With the support of the Recreation and Parks Commission, staff balloted affected residents of Angelo Drive and asked them to choose a replacement tree for the *Ficus* trees which would be removed en mass. At the end of the voting period (close of business Friday April 15, 2011), ballots were received from approximately 69% of the addresses within the affected area. Approximately 91% of the ballots received opted for the Podocarpus Fern Pine. The other tree choice option (Crape Myrtle) received less than 10% of the votes.

In summary, the City was petitioned by a number of residents of Angelo Drive asking that the City remove and replace *Ficus* trees on the 1700 block of their street due to the destructive nature of the roots of the trees. Throughout a community outreach process, no objections to the removal of the *Ficus* trees were raised. By majority vote, affected residents of Angelo Drive chose the Podocarpus Fern Pine as a replacement for the *Ficus* trees which would be removed and replaced en mass.

FISCAL IMPACT

The cost to remove the remaining 16 *Ficus* trees on Angelo Drive will be \$8,100.00. The cost to install 18 trees (replacements for 16 *Ficus* trees to be removed and two existing vacant sites where *Ficus* trees have been windthrown in the past) in a 48 inch box size would be \$27,000.00, making the total project cost \$35,000.00. This cost would be

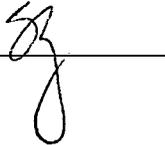
Meeting Date: May 24, 2011.

funded through the current Fund 16 CIP budgetary allotment for removal and replacement of trees through the Street Tree Master Plan program for fiscal year 2010/2011.

RECOMMENDATION

Based on the results of the balloting of affected property owners, staff recommends that the 16 Ficus trees on the south parkway of the section of Angelo Drive between Benedict Canyon and Bridle Lane be removed and replaced with 48 inch box size Podocarpus Fern Pine trees and that two currently vacant spots be planted as part of this project. This recommendation was supported by a vote of 5-0 by the Recreation and Parks Commission at the April 26, 2011 meeting of that Commission.

Steve Zoet
Approved By

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'SZ', is written over a horizontal line. The signature is stylized and extends slightly above and below the line.

Attachment 1



CITY OF BEVERLY HILLS

COMMUNITY SERVICES DEPARTMENT- RECREATION AND PARKS

MEMORANDUM

TO: Recreation and Parks Commission

FROM: Ken Pfalzgraf-Parks and Urban Forest Manager

DATE: April 26, 2011

SUBJECT: Angelo Drive Ficus Street Tree Master Plan-Replacement Tree Recommendation

INTRODUCTION

During July of 2010, the City was presented with a petition asking that the Ficus (*Ficus microcarpa* "Nitida") trees which currently line the south side of Angelo Drive between Benedict Canyon and Bridle Lane be removed and replaced. The petition, which was signed by a significant number of residents in the affected area, was accompanied by a letter which listed a number of reasons for the request including that the aggressive roots of the trees have a history of damaging both City and private infrastructure.

Staff presented this petition to the Recreation and Parks Commission at the October 2011 meeting. Several residents of Angelo Drive attended the meeting and addressed the Commission regarding problems they had experienced with the trees. At the conclusion of the discussion, the Commission endorsed a staff recommendation that a Street Tree Master Plan (STMP) be developed for the removal and replacement of Ficus trees on Angelo Drive.

The public outreach process for the Angelo Drive Ficus STMP process included an "on the street" meeting with property owners which was held during February 2011. At this meeting, property owners were asked to consider two replacement tree types that were deemed appropriate by the City arborist for the parkway of Angelo Drive. Based on input from property owners that attended the February 2011 "on the street" meeting, staff formulated a ballot that was mailed to all affected address to give property owners the ability to choose a replacement tree type by majority vote.

Ballot response rates exceeded the 50% minimum mandated by the Commission, with approximately 69% voting.

Based on the results of the balloting, staff recommends that the Ficus trees on the south side of Angelo Drive, between Benedict Canyon and Bridle Lane be removed and replaced with 48" box Podocarpus Fern Pine (*Podocarpus macrophyllus*) trees.

Affected residents have been noticed of the results of the balloting and have been invited to speak to the Commission regarding the matter if they choose to do so (see attached invitation).

BACKGROUND

In the past, *Ficus* trees were a popular street tree choice for many communities in Southern California. The *Ficus* is a pollution tolerant, fast growing, evergreen tree that seemed to be the answer to all tree choice problems. As time passed, the positive attributes of the *Ficus* were diminished when the aggressive root systems of these trees began to invade infrastructure elements (sidewalk, drive aprons, curbing, underground utilities). Repair of these damages involves the cutting of tree roots, which proves counterproductive in terms of tree stability, health and longevity.

When roots on trees are cut during infrastructure repair projects, stabilizing and preserving affected trees often involves the reduction and continued maintenance of tree crown size. At one time, it was thought that annual pruning of *Ficus* trees with a history of significant root cuts would provide tree stability and stunt expansion of the trunk and root flare, thus limiting the potential for further root related infrastructure damage. In addition to taxing budgets and limiting service to trees in other areas of the urban forest, the practice of annual defoliation goes against what is known to be physiologically sound treatment of trees. In addition to weakening the tree over time, the annual and drastic defoliation of trees can increase susceptibility to diseases and insects.

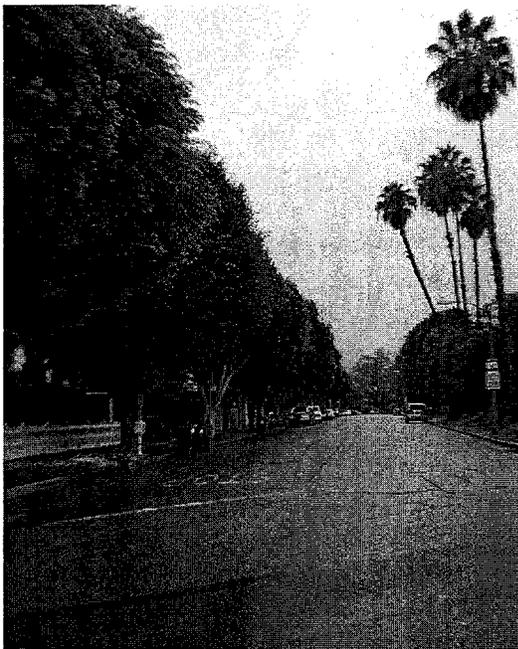


Figure 1-Ficus trees along south side of Angelo Drive

In order to address problematic *Ficus* street trees in the City of Beverly Hills, City Council approved Street Tree Master Plan Phase II in 1999. The STMP plan requires public input in the process of removing and replacing problematic or declining street trees, including the choice of replacement tree types through a balloting of residents. Streets affected by STPM Phase II to date include a section of South Santa Monica Boulevard, Lasky Drive, Durant Drive, Olympic Boulevard and Angelo Drive. An unrelated revitalization project has decreased the *Ficus* tree population, while improving species diversity, in the Business Triangle area of the City.

At present, there are 16 *Ficus* trees and two vacant sites on the southern side of Angelo Drive between Benedict Canon and Bridle Lane. There are no *Ficus* trees on the northern side of the street, as sidewalk improvements were never made on that side of Angelo Drive (see Fig. 1).

The *Ficus* is the second tree type to occupy the parkways along the street. The removal and replacement of the original Angelo Drive parkway trees, the *Queen Palm* (*Syagrus romanzoffianum*), was recommended in the 1963 revision of the Street Tree Program of 1944. In reviewing other segments of the plan, it appears as if the performance of the *Queen Palm* was problematic in various areas of the City at the time, including streets in close proximity to Angelo Drive (i.e. Chevy Chase, Tower Road). Given what is found in the urban forestry records for the City, the *Ficus* trees on Angelo Drive are approximately 50 years old.

Based on the historic performance of *Ficus* trees in the City, one segment of the Recreation and Parks Department-Urban Forestry Division Work Plan of 2004 suggested the prioritized development of additional STMP-Phase II projects for several *Ficus* tree lined streets in the City. Angelo Drive was second priority, just behind Chevy Chase Drive but ahead of Cynthia Street, the portion of South Santa Monica Boulevard between Wilshire Boulevard and the west City limit, South Beverly Drive, Robertson Boulevard and finally La Cienega Boulevard. Prioritization was based on general severity of field conditions at the time of review.

Considerations on Angelo Drive include:

- Tradesman stampings, as well as the coloration differences in the sidewalk concrete on Angelo Drive show that it has been necessary to perform sidewalk repairs on the street at least two (2) since the trees were planted. These repairs are most likely needed because of displacement of infrastructure caused by *Ficus* tree roots.
- The *Ficus* tree has a bad reputation in the neighborhood. Two *Ficus* trees have been wind thrown during storms on Angelo Drive in the past. The *Ficus* trees on adjacent Chevy Chase Drive have been removed and replaced due to root problems, decay and tree failure.
- The wider parkways on Angelo Drive only mask a looming problem. The parkway on Angelo Drive are 87 inches wide. This is nearly double the width of the 45 inch parkways at adjacent Chevy Chase Drive. While the wider Angelo Drive parkways have held the *Ficus* trees and their roots better thus far, the future holds infrastructure disruptions similar to those seen with the more mature *Ficus* situated on boulevards with Olympic being a fine example.
- Replacement of the trees now will help to avoid a sidewalk replacement project and additional costs to the City in the future. At present, the vast majority of the sidewalk adjacent to the trees on Angelo Drive is not displaced. This will not be the case in the future as the trees grow larger. In addition, the larger a tree is, the more it costs to remove. The benefit of replacing these trees now is two-fold.
- Most of the homes in the City are serviced by sewer lines that exit to the alley. Since there is no alley between the southern side of Angelo Drive and the street to the south (Chevy Chase Drive), the sewer lines exit to the front of the property. A majority of residents who have *Ficus* trees in front of their homes have signed a petition asking that the *Ficus* trees be removed and replaced, citing that "Over time, invasive roots from the *Ficus nitida* trees have grown into our sewer lines (and roots have reached to the middle of our street). This has caused plumbing backups, broken and cracked sewer lines. It has necessitated that some of the homeowners, at their own expense, clean out and repair their personal sewer lines being destroyed by public trees on the parkway".

PUBLIC OUTREACH

This process began in July of 2010 when the City was represented with a petition signed by a significant number of residents of Angelo Drive asking that the City remove and replace the *Ficus* trees with a more appropriate, less-disruptive, tree type.

The issue was discussed at the October 23, 2010 meeting of the Recreation and Parks Commission at which several residents of Angelo Drive spoke to encourage the Commission to support a staff recommendation for the development of a Street Tree Master Plan which would replace *Ficus* trees on their street.

As part of the public outreach process for the development of the Street Tree Master Plan, staff invited all residents of addresses of Angelo Drive between Benedict Canon and Bridle Lane to attend an "on the street" meeting on Wednesday February 2, 2011 to discuss the potential removal and replacement of Ficus trees in the parkway on the south side of Angelo Drive. In the invitation residents who were not going to be able to attend the meeting were encouraged to contact the City arborist to make their opinions known. No one contacted the City prior to the "on the street" meeting.

On the day of the "on the street" meeting, three residents of Angelo Drive, as well as one from Chevy Chase Drive, who currently have Ficus trees in the parkway at their respective addresses were joined by an additional two residents of Angelo Drive who have no Ficus trees at their addresses. Those that attended represented approximately 38% of the addresses that were invited. The Commission Street Tree Master Plan liaison (Commissioners Anderson and Gold) greeted the attendees who were then provided with the staff report of October 26, 2010 which described the history of the problems related to Ficus trees on the street. Included among the attachments to that report was a petition from a majority of residents with Ficus trees which requested that the trees be removed and replaced.

Since there were no objections to the removal of the Ficus trees, staff distributed tree information sheets for two tree types, the Crape Myrtle and the Podocarpus Fern Pine, which would be appropriate replacement trees for the parkway on the south side of Angelo Drive. Staff explained that the criteria for appropriateness included considering only those trees that would be of appropriate size and scale at maturity and excluding from consideration those trees that are known for aggressive, invasive and/or profuse surface roots.

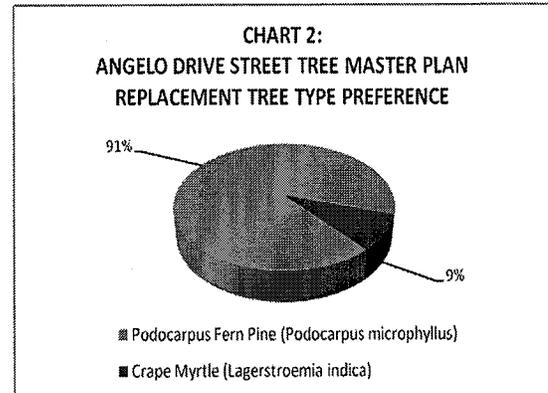
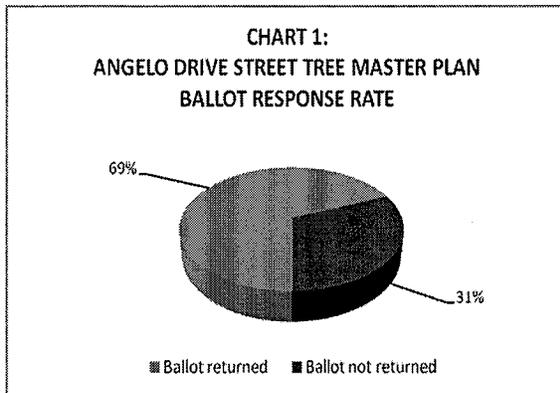
Several attendees inquired if the parkway on Angelo Drive was wide enough to increase the size of the trees being planted. Staff responded that the Angelo Drive parkway, being wider than those of Chevy Chase Drive where 36" box trees were planted, would be able to accept the planting of 48" box trees. The group seemed happy with the idea that the replacement trees would be a bit larger.

One attendee suggested that if attendees or other residents of the street thought of another tree type that could be considered as a replacement tree, they should contact the City arborist prior to the February 2011 meeting of the Commission. No alternate suggestions were presented prior to that meeting. The "on the street" meeting closed with staff asking attendees if there were any objections to balloting the street to ask residents to choose a replacement tree for the problematic Ficus trees using the two types of trees recommended by staff. There were no objections.

On March 18, 2011 residents of Angelo Drive, whose homes are located between Benedict Canyon and Bridle Lane, were mailed a ballot that asked them to choose between the Crape Myrtle and the Podocarpus Fern Pine as a replacement tree for the Ficus. The mailing included a summary of the process to date as well as information on the replacement trees. Residents were asked to return their ballots prior to April 15, 2011 and advised that the Recreation and Parks Commission would require that a staff recommendation for the removal and replacement of Ficus trees on Angelo Drive must be accompanied by the vote of at least 50% of the residents of the street.

BALLOT RESULTS

At the end of the voting period (close of business Friday April 15, 2011), ballots were received from approximately 69% of the addresses within the affected area (11 of 16 addresses). Approximately 91% of the ballots received were votes for the Podocarpus Fern Pine (10 of 11 votes). The other tree choice option (Crape Myrtle) received less than 10% of the votes (1 of 11 votes). The ballot results* are seen at Charts 1 and 2. The tree information sheet for Podocarpus Fern Pine is attached.



As a side note, remembering that only the south side of Angelo Drive between Benedict Canyon and Bridle Lane has trees that will be removed and replaced, ballots were received from approximately 89% of the addresses that will actually have trees removed and replaced (8 of 9 addresses) with 100% of those addresses voting for the Podocarpus Fern Pine.

FISCAL IMPACT

The cost to remove the remaining 16 *Ficus* trees on Angelo Drive will be approximately \$8,100.00. The cost to install 18 trees (replacements for 16 *Ficus* trees to be removed and two existing vacant sites where *Ficus* trees have been windthrown in the past) in a 48 inch box size would be approximately \$27,000.00, making the total project cost approximately \$35,000.00. This cost could be funded through the current CIP budgetary allotment for fiscal year 2010/2011. Taking current conditions into consideration, a phased removal and replacement program is not recommended.

SUMMARY

The long-term appropriateness of the *Ficus* trees in the parkway along the south side of Angelo Drive has come into question. A majority of residents on the street who have *Ficus* trees in the parkway at their properties presented the City with a petition in July 2010 asking that the City remove and replace the *Ficus* trees due to the damage the roots of the trees have caused to both City and private property. Subsequent public outreach efforts have determined that the majority of residents in the affected area support the removal of the *Ficus* trees and the planting of the replacement tree that was selected by popular vote, the Podocarpus Fern Pine (*Podocarpus macrophyllus*). Current funding levels are sufficient to complete this project prior to the end of fiscal year 2010-2011.

*One vote was received after the close of the voting period and was not counted. Had this vote arrived prior to the close of the voting period, it would have improved the overall response rate and %age favoring Podocarpus Fern Pine as a replacement tree to 75 and 92 % respectively.

RECOMMENDATION

Based on the results of the balloting of affected property owners, staff recommends that the 16 Ficus trees on the south parkway of the section of Angelo Drive between Benedict Canyon and Bridle Lane be removed and replaced with 48 inch box size Podocarpus Fern Pine trees and that two currently vacant spots be planted as part of this project.

Attachments:

Correspondence inviting affected residents to address the Commission regarding balloting outcome

Podocarpus Fern Pine Tree Information Sheet

COMMUNITY SERVICES DEPARTMENT
455 N. Rexford Drive
Beverly Hills, CA 90210-4817
(310) 285-2536
FAX: (310) 385-0840



STEVE ZOET, DIRECTOR

April 19, 2011

Re: Angelo Drive Ficus Street Tree Master Plan ballot results, notice of meeting

Dear Property Owner:

Over the past several months, the City of Beverly Hills has conducted a public outreach process to gather property owner input regarding tree type preferences for the replacement of Ficus trees which current line the south side of Angelo Drive between Benedict Canyon and Bridal Way.

This process began as the City was represented with a petition signed by a significant number of residents of Angelo Drive asking that the City remove and replace the Ficus trees with a more appropriate and less-disruptive tree type. The issue was discussed with the Recreation and Parks Commission before an "on the street" meeting was held on February 2, 2011. At this meeting, representatives of the Recreation and Parks Commission and residents of the street met with the City arborist to discuss problems with the Ficus trees. Since no one present at the meeting objected to the removal of the Ficus tree, the discussion moved to considering the attributes of several replacement tree types. At the end of this meeting, it was agreed that residents of the street should be balloted to choose between two appropriate replacement trees.

On March 18, 2011 residents of Angelo Drive, whose homes are located between Benedict Canyon and Bridal Way, were asked to choose between the Crape Myrtle and the Podocarpus Fern Pine as a replacement tree for the Ficus. The mailing included a summary of the process to date as well as information on the replacement trees. Residents were asked to return their ballots prior to April 15, 2011 and advised that the Recreation and Parks Commission would require that a staff recommendation for the removal and replacement of Ficus trees on Angelo Drive must be accompanied by the vote of at least 50% of the residents of the street.

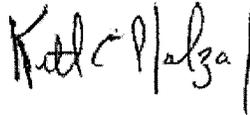
As of the date of this mailing, the 50% response requirement has been met. 68% of property owners responded to the balloting (11 of 16 affected addresses). 91% of the respondents selected the Podocarpus Fern Pine as the replacement tree (10 of 11 votes).

Based on the results of this balloting, City staff will make a final recommendation to the Recreation and Parks Commission to remove the Ficus trees from the south side of Angelo Drive between Benedict Canyon and Bridal Way and replace them with 48" box Podocarpus Fern Pine (*Podocarpus macrophyllus*) trees. The staff report, including the final recommendation, will be presented to the Commission on Tuesday April 26, 2011.

If you wish to address the Recreation and Parks Commission regarding the report recommendation for your street, please attend the meeting of the Commission slated for 2:00 p.m. on Tuesday April 26, 2011. The meeting will be held in Conference Room A, located on the first floor of City Hall (455 North Rexford Drive). Parking is available in the parking structure located near the Beverly Hills Public Library on east side of North Rexford Drive, mid-block between Burton Way and Santa Monica Boulevard. Enter City Hall at ground level on the North Rexford side and use the elevator to access the first floor.

If you are unable to attend this meeting and wish to have your comments presented during the meeting, please contact the Recreation and Parks administration office at (310) 285-2537 to give your input. If you prefer to use email, please submit your comments to kpfalzgraf@beverlyhills.org. Thank you for your participation in this important process.

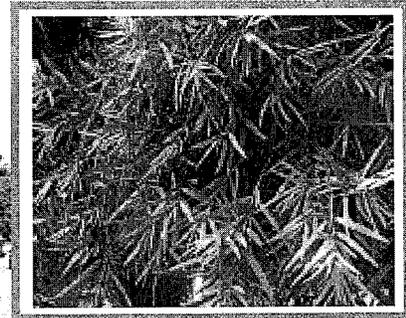
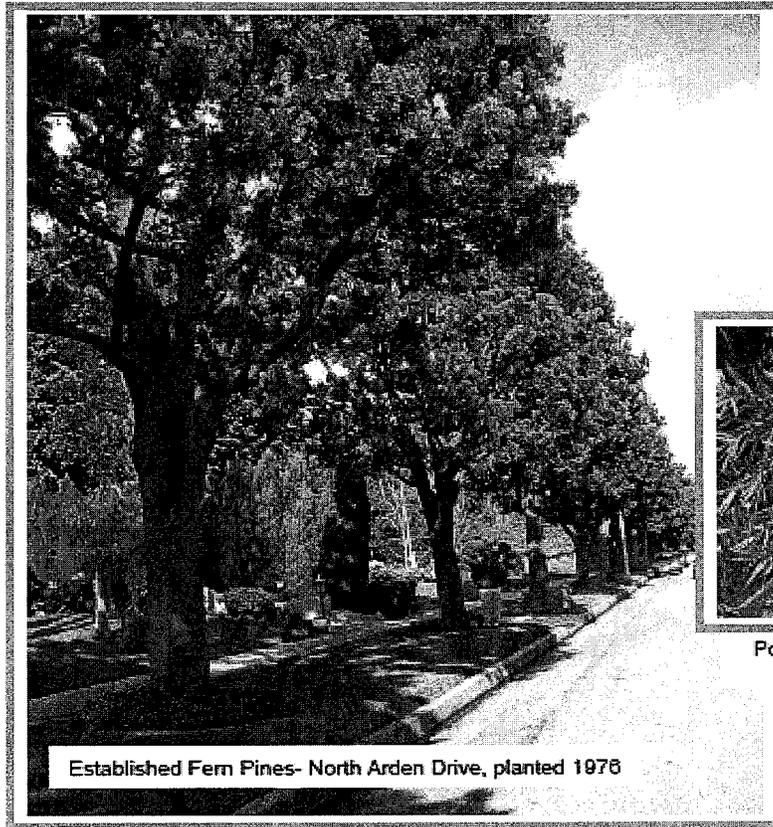
Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ken Pfalzgraf". The signature is written in a cursive, somewhat stylized font.

Ken Pfalzgraf
Parks and Urban Forest Manager
City Arborist



Tree Information Sheet Podocarpus/Fern Pine (*Podocarpus gracilior*)



Podocarpus/Fern Pine leaves

Native to East Africa, the Podocarpus/Fern Pine is not a pine at all. It is an evergreen that enjoys increasing popularity as a street tree. This popularity is due to a reputation of fine textured cleanliness in the landscape, as well as the ability of the Podocarpus/Fern Pine to remain generally free of insect and disease problems. Long lived in the California landscape, the slow growing Podocarpus/Fern Pine can reach 60 feet in height and spread to 40 feet in width. The 2 inch long, lance shaped leaves of the Fern Pine are light green when young and bluish green when mature. After train pruning when young to develop structure, the pruning requirements of the tree are minimal.

The Podocarpus/Fern Pine is available in 36-inch box size containers. At the time of installation, a 36 inch box tree would be approximately 10 feet tall, with a crown spread of approximately 5 feet.

Examples of established Podocarpus/Fern Pine trees can be found on North Arden Drive. Younger trees can be found along Charleville Boulevard (east of Robertson Boulevard) and along Durant Drive where the Fern Pine was selected by residents of the street as a replacement for problematic Ficus trees.