



## CITY COUNCIL STAFF REPORT

DATE: FEBRUARY 6, 2013 NEW BUSINESS

SUBJECT: CONSIDERATION OF RELOCATION OF FICUS TREES AT DESERT FASHION PLAZA TO DESIGNATED CITY OWNED PARKS AND PROPERTIES

FROM: David H. Ready, City Manager

BY: Community & Economic Development Department

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### SUMMARY:

This action is to seek direction from Council on the opportunity to contain and relocate certain existing Ficus trees from the Desert Fashion Plaza Redevelopment site to other designated areas to be determined.

### RECOMMENDATION:

Direct staff to:

1. Proceed with the potential relocation of trees from the Desert Fashion Plaza to other appropriate City-owned sites;
2. Solicit bids from licensed arborists/tree relocation contractors; and
3. Identify additional sources of funding the relocation of trees from Desert Fashion Plaza to other appropriate City-owned sites.

### BACKGROUND:

The City of Palm Springs acquired substantial portions of the Desert Fashion Plaza (DFP) property for future public use as part of the overall redevelopment plan. Based on the redevelopment plans and proposed network of streets, there are a number of mature Ficus trees that would be destroyed or lost during the demolition phase. Staff has estimated 20 mature trees aged at approximately 30 years would be lost during construction of the project.

Several of these trees are along the outer edge of the parking structure, along Tahquitz Canyon Way, where Belardo Road will be constructed. Others are along the elevated walkway from the back of the mall to the Palm Springs Art Museum, where "New Main" Street will be built. The largest number is at the rear of the I. Magnin building and in the

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sunken amphitheatre, which will be filled in for the construction of the Event Center. Rather than destroy these trees, it may be possible to contain and relocate some portion of these trees to other City properties.

On January 21, 2012, the City suffered a significant windstorm event that resulted in the loss of several hundred mature trees throughout the City including many at Ruth Hardy, Sunrise, Desert Highland, and Frances Stevens Parks, among other areas.

Frances Stevens Park, in particular, would be a good candidate site for transporting these large trees, since there are no apparent physical barriers and the site is less than a mile away. Also, there were several large Ficus trees lost at Frances Stevens Park during the January 2012 Windstorm Event, including four very large Ficus trees, over 70 years old, at the back courtyard of the Palm Canyon Theatre. The loss of these trees completely altered the character and setting of this property by removing the shading and beautiful tree canopy that covered the entire courtyard area. The maximum replacement tree reimbursement from the City's insurance policy wind damage claim is \$5,000 per tree. In an area such as the Palm Canyon Theatre courtyard, the replacement trees available at this cost allowance would not be close to what was lost. The trees at the DFP being considered for relocation are sizable, with trunk diameters exceeding 12". While not as large as the trees that were lost, they would be at an appropriate scale for the Palm Canyon Theatre Courtyard and restore the previous setting and atmosphere, not identically but effectively. The Public Works Department currently has a landscape architect designing the Palm Canyon Theatre courtyard for landscape replacement.

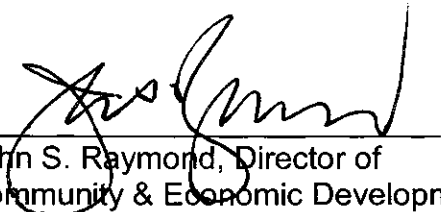
Last fall, staff met with licensed arborist consultants, ArborTech, at the DFP site to determine if it was possible to move these trees and if so, what it would entail. Following the site visit, ArborTech determined that it could be done given a lead time of several months for pruning, trimming and containment of the trees in their current locations. The estimated cost to move each tree is \$10,000 and this would include transport and replanting with the City taking responsibility for road closures, signage, public works escort as necessary to transport the trees.

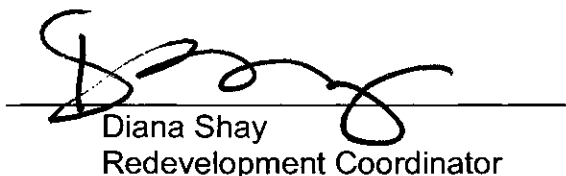
If the trees survive relocation it would be a benefit to the City, but there is no guarantee that the trees will survive after being moved. Part of the consideration, too, is to work with the developer, Wessman Development, on the timing of the various demolition activities. The demolition schedule may reduce the number of trees that would be practical to box and relocate. With the first phase of demolition of the DFP scheduled to occur in the near future, time is of the essence if the City wishes to proceed. Because of the time constraints, it is recommended that, if Council is in favor of relocating these trees, staff will begin immediately to contract under the City's Procurement Ordinance for the services of a licensed arborist/tree moving contractor to begin the containment process for the most promising trees. Since the optimum lead time needed is several months, the simultaneous study of the number of trees and relocations sites and review with appointed boards and/or commissions can occur.

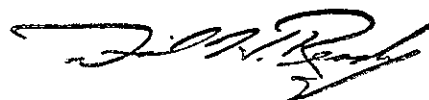
At this stage, staff is requesting direction from Council as to their desire to pursue this opportunity. This item would be brought back before Council during the bidding process for the selection of a Contractor to undertake the project.

FISCAL IMPACT:

The estimated cost for the relocation of 20 trees from the Desert Fashion Plaza to other City sites is approximately \$10,000 per tree for a total estimated amount of \$200,000. Funds for the relocation of the trees is not currently budgeted. Potential partial funding may be from insurance proceeds from the 2012 wind damage claim. City staff will review and try to identify other funding sources, at or before returning with a contract for a licensed arborist. Additionally, the City will incur other internal costs for street closures, pilot cars, signage, barricades, etc. during the relocation process.

  
John S. Raymond, Director of  
Community & Economic Development

  
Diana Shay  
Redevelopment Coordinator

  
David H. Ready  
City Manager

Attachments:

1. RGM&N Proposal
2. Photos of Example Trees at DFP proposed for relocation

# Attachment 1

RGM&N will provide the following services:

1. We will hand dig three Ficus Nitida trees located at entrance to mall. Please note: this process will take place over several months, entailing several phases of root pruning, and building specialty containers around trees.
2. In the process we will be placing, "sides" to create a box around the root system, and at some time, feeding, and some upper scaffolding trimming.
3. Please note; the more time (a complete year would be fine, the more time, the slower die process, the larger the percentage of survival gets), the better we are when finished the tree will have a box built around it, to which we will actually move the box, as opposed to the tree.
4. Pricing includes all labor, equipment, transportation, to prepare, dig, and move trees to new location at park, including crane, trucks, and planting.

Please note transportation allowances, such as street closures, and pilot cars (would have to be secured by city as fee as moving from point A to point B. (PS Police Dept. etc.) These trees are extremely large and will not meet the minimum standards, for permits, etc. Note: we are highly experienced at moving large trees, these trees are such we will have to plan a route that has no over-hanging obstructions, wires, street lights, etc. We have no money allocated in this bid to pay for closures, Police assistance, and or permit fees.

\$9,800/tree

Attachment 2





Note: Trunk  
Diameter  
greater than  
1 foot.