



## CITY COUNCIL AGENDA REPORT

**Meeting Date:** May 19, 2022

**From:** Karen Kinser, Deputy Director of Public Works  
Noreen Leek, Parks & Recreation Director

**Subject:** Community Park Festival Tree Replacement

### Community Goal/Result

Community Building, Ecological Sustainability

### Purpose

Preserve a long-standing tradition valued by the community while encouraging connectivity and demonstrating environmental stewardship.

### Recommendation

Accept the recommendation from the ad hoc subcommittee of Open Space and Ecology Committee (OSEC) and Parks & Recreation (P&R) Commission members regarding replacement of the City's Festival tree and direct staff to proceed accordingly.

### Background

For more than three decades, the deodar cedar tree at the Community Park has served as the focal point for Brisbane's annual Festival of Lights event and has been an asset cherished by the community. It became apparent many years ago, and was subsequently affirmed by arborist assessments, that the tree's overall health was progressively declining, attributable to a variety of factors.

A joint ad hoc subcommittee, comprised of members of OSEC and the P&R Commission, was established to review the issue and provide recommendations. In preparation for future Festival tree needs, a 20' Sequoiadendron was planted in late 2019 at the northeast corner of San Francisco and Old County Road in the park. The hope was that this tree would have time to mature in place and be established when the decline of the original tree became prohibitive to its use. Unfortunately, an undetected irrigation system leak caused a rapid decline in health and untimely removal of the new tree in early 2021. The leak has since been isolated, with repair of irrigation issues planned.

In November of 2021, when certified arborist Tim Chang and his crew arrived onsite to prepare the original deodar cedar tree for the Festival of Lights event, he observed that the tree had developed a significant lean after heavy rains and winds, and he recommended its removal. City staff consulted a second certified arborist, who confirmed the assessment and the recommendation for removal. Both expressed their concern regarding public safety. The tree exhibited a 15% lean and displayed movement at the trunk during a pull test, indicating its instability. That day, Public Works staff placed barricades and caution tape in the area

surrounding the tree. It was determined that with the area protected, the tree would remain through the 2021 Festival of Lights and holiday season and be removed shortly thereafter.

### **Discussion**

The joint subcommittee met in December 2021 to discuss various alternatives. They discussed placement options, ideal tree species, and how best to achieve a long-term solution. The subcommittee was in consensus that the following criteria are essential to a successful outcome: a native species that would both thrive in Brisbane's climate and achieve the appearance of a holiday tree, a small grove of 3-4 trees that could grow in community and provide protection from the elements (i.e., wind), and trees that were young/small enough to take root with a lesser risk of transplant shock. Inclusion of an establishment period in the tree planting was requested. Douglas Fir tree species were recommended as meeting all the requirements.

Following the Council's recommendation in January, staff secured an arborist to analyze the situation and provide recommendations for consideration. Staff selected John McClenahan of S.P. McClenahan Company, and John visited the planting site on 3/9/22. Following his visit, he provided recommendations based on multiple criteria; suitability of a tree species for continued use in a festival tree lighting role, for planting in the existing soil based on the laboratory soil analysis, a moderate to fast growing species, and a species that is known to thrive in our microenvironment. He recommended two species that were established in the area and are thriving without signs of environmental stress.

The joint ad hoc subcommittee reconvened to review the arborists assessment and make a recommendation to City Council regarding replanting. The subcommittee is recommending planting a small grove of Douglas Fir trees to provide mutual support from the onsite wind conditions during their early years.

Finally, Mr. McClenahan offered staff his professional opinions on different venues for tree purchases, recommended planting procedures, and cultural practices to offer the best result regarding tree establishment. He also noted that after 20 years, the crowns of trees planted in a grove might overlap and intentional select pruning could be necessary to ensure the health of the trees.

### **Fiscal Impact**

Planting of the three recommended trees and modification of the irrigation system is expected to cost approximately \$6,000.


### **Attachments**

1. Photo of proposed species




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Karen Kinser, Deputy Director of Public Works



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Noreen Leek, Parks & Recreation Director



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Clay Holstine, City Manager

ATTACHMENT 1

