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Honorable Jose Huizar, Chair
Planning and Land Use Management Committee
Los Angeles City Council
200 North Spring Street, Room 395
Los Angeles, CA 90012

**REPORT FROM CITY PLANNING ON SOUTH PARK BID RECOMMENDED TREES PALETTE
COUNCIL FILE 15-0547-S3**

DTLA FORWARD/COUNCIL MOTION

On May 1, 2015 City Council adopted a series of Motions introduced by Council District 14 as part of the DTLA Forward initiative. The emphasis of DTLA Forward is related to five areas of improvement:

- Access and linkages that improve Downtown Streets
- Access and linkages that improve the pedestrian experience
- Uses and activities that enliven public space
- Alignment of Downtown's image and brand
- Activation of commerce that promotes sustainability

The motion filed under Council File No. 15-0547-S3 instructs the Bureau of Street Services (BSS) Urban Forestry Division (UFD) to work with the Department of City Planning (DCP) and the South Park Business Improvement District (SPBID) to develop a street tree palette and guidelines for tree removal and replacement in the South Park neighborhood of Downtown Los Angeles to aid in aligning Downtown's urban design image as it relates to consistent and complementary foliage and tree selection.

SUMMARY

In response to Council motion 15-0547-S3, Department of City Planning (DCP) presents an update on the South Park BID Street Trees Palette for street tree plantings along public rights of way within the South Park neighborhood of Downtown Los Angeles. The South Park BID Recommended Street Tree Palette will be incorporated as an appendix to the Downtown Design Guide to provide clear and consistent guidance on/regarding tree selection in the South Park neighborhood.

ROLE OF THE DEPARTMENTS

Various City agencies play a role in streetscape improvements. In response to the Council Motion, the following agencies collaborated to create a recommended street tree palette for the South Park neighborhood. What follows is the general roles that the various agencies play:

- Public Works
 - Bureau of Street Services – Urban Forestry Division (UFD)
 - Has authority over the planting, care, inspection, permitting, and maintenance of the greenscape contained in the city’s public right-of-way
 - Responsible for determining street tree species, size, and location in the public right-of-way. All street tree plantings must receive approval by UFD.
- Other
 - Department of City Planning (DCP)
 - Prepares, maintains, and implements the General Plan and associated zoning and land use regulations, including 35 Community Plans. The Central City Community Plan and associated Downtown Design Guide provide guidance for the development of Downtown Los Angeles, including the South Park neighborhood.
 - South Park Business Improvement District (SPBID)
 - Public-private partnership that collaborates with governing bodies and property/business owners for the maintenance, development, and promotion of the South Park district.
 - Leads several initiatives including green alleys, parklets, public art programs, sidewalk repairs, and walkability studies to improve the streetscape of the South Park district.

DISCUSSION AND BACKGROUND

ROLE OF URBAN CANOPIES

A lush urban canopy is essential to a vibrant, sustainable, and livable Downtown. Street trees are a vital part of Downtown’s infrastructure, providing environmental, ecological, social, as well as aesthetic benefits.

For instance, trees are key players in the storm water capture and filtration system by capturing precipitation both in their leafy canopies and root systems, which minimizes the amount of stormwater that is transferred to the stormwater system. Tree canopies aid in mitigating against air pollution, as they consume carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases that contribute to global warming, meanwhile emitting oxygen as part of photosynthesis. Leafy canopies capture airborne particles such as dirt, dust, and soot, and are especially essential in urban areas with high traffic volumes. Additionally, trees help to reduce the heat island effect by providing shade along sidewalks and streets.

Street trees are also essential in fostering neighborhood character and pedestrian activity. Apart from environmental benefits, tree canopies aid in pedestrian comfort and activity by providing lush overhead canopies that provide relief from direct sunlight. A lush urban canopy provides visual relief and greenery in an otherwise built-up urban area, allowing for a more pleasant streetscape and pedestrian experience. Street trees support traffic calming; closely-planted trees create vertical walls framing the roadway, thereby providing a defined edge along the roadway and reducing driving speeds. Finally, streets and neighborhoods that have designated street tree species benefit from a consistent and unified tree planting patterns, creating an iconic and memorable sense of place.

SOUTH PARK

The South Park neighborhood encompasses 52 square blocks in Downtown Los Angeles and is generally bounded by the 110 Freeway to the north, the 10 Freeway to the west, Broadway to the south, and 9th Street to the east. Within the South Park district, there are dozens of development projects underway, including the construction of luxury high-rise towers, mid-rise residential buildings, and adaptive reuse of existing structures for creative office and hotel uses. Many projects are required to plant street trees within the public right of way. With such intensity of new development, transit improvements, and streetscape enhancements, it is the opportune time for the City of Los Angeles to provide guidance on how to best cultivate a lush urban canopy within the public rights of way of the South Park neighborhood.

SOUTH PARK BID RECOMMENDED STREET TREE PALETTE

In response to the Council motion and in an attempt to develop a cohesive streetscape in South Park, the SPBID worked collaboratively with Council District 14, UFD, DCP, City pLAnts, professional landscape architects and local developers to create a preliminary list of recommended street trees for the South Park district. The Recommended Street Tree Palette is the result of an extensive outreach process, in which the SPBID helped to organize meetings with stakeholders in the South Park development community as well as City staff. This result s in an agreed upon palette of street trees and required tree well dimensions to be recommended by CD14, DCP, and UFD. Street tree species were selected based on the following criteria: 1) shade, 2) species diversity, 3) current district palette, and 4) overall aesthetic.

Generally, the intent of species selection is to: provide optimum shade; reduce energy use; provide an optimum growing area; minimize infrastructure conflict; and generally increase the ecosystem benefits.

DOWNTOWN DESIGN GUIDE

The South Park BID Recommended Street Tree Palette will be finalized by UFD, incorporated into an Appendix of the updated Downtown Design Guide, and will be recommended for any tree plantings within the public rights of way of the South Park neighborhood.

In addition, a generalized Master Tree List will be created for the rest of Downtown Los Angeles, which will contain a recommended list of trees that are deemed suitable by Urban Forestry for planting along public rights of way in Downtown. The Downtown

Downtown Design Guide update is targeted for presentation to the Citywide Planning Commission for approval in the summer of 2016.

All trees are from the preexisting BOE Street Tree Selection Guide, and will be selected based on recommendations from Urban Forestry. The list is to provide guidance to developers, designers, and city staff. Applicants may consult with UFD for approval of any other proposed tree species.

CONCLUSION

The South Park BID Recommended Street Tree Palette, which will be incorporated as an appendix to the Downtown Design Guide, provides clear direction on the tree species that should be planted along public rights of way in the South Park neighborhood of Downtown Los Angeles. This aligns with the mission of the DTLA Forward initiative by applying a strategic process to the creation of a consistent and complementary foliage and tree selection. The Recommended Street Tree Palette will help to foster coherent and sustainable tree plantings that provide optimum shade, maximize stormwater capture, and foster neighborhood character and walkability in the South Park neighborhood.

If you have any questions about the topics in this report, please contact **Connie Chauv** in the Department of City Planning's Urban Design Studio at (213) 978-0016 or connie.chauv@lacity.org or **Bryan Eck** in the Downtown Policy section of the Department of City Planning at (213) 978-1304 or bryan.eck@lacity.org.

Sincerely,

VINCENT P. BERTONI, AICP
Director of Planning

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Simon Pastucha", written over a horizontal line.

SIMON PASTUCHA
Senior City Planner, Urban Design Studio