



City of Arts & Innovation

Utility Services / Land Use / Energy Development Committee

TO: UTILITY SERVICES / LAND USE / ENERGY DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE MEMBERS **DATE: OCTOBER 15, 2018**

FROM: COMMUNITY & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT **WARDS: 3, 4, & 5**

SUBJECT: VICTORIA AVENUE CITRUS POLICY - DIRECT SUBMITTAL

ISSUE

That the Utility Services/Land Use/Energy Development Committee review policies established for Victoria Avenue and provide direction on potentially updating these policies based on current conditions.

RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Utility Services/Land Use/Energy Development Committee:

- 1) Receive a report on policies established for Victoria Avenue;
- 2) Provide direction on the policies related to tree planting along Victoria Avenue, including re-evaluating the citrus policy; and
- 3) Provide direction on the maintenance and irrigation responsibilities for trees along Victoria Avenue on private property.

BACKGROUND

In 2003, the City adopted policies to preserve Victoria Avenue's historic agricultural character, the City's citrus heritage, and the Greenbelt. These policies are reflected in Proposition R, Measure C, and the General Plan 2025.

For Victoria Avenue, an Ad-Hoc Committee presented recommendations to the City Council on how to implement the policies related to the corridor (see Attachment 1). One recommendation was the requirement that new development provide three rows of citrus trees in the right-of way or in a landscape easement. This would be achieved through planting and maintenance standards and guidelines with the Parks, Recreation and Community Services Department being responsible for the long term maintenance and irrigation.

The Council's November 2003 action:

- 1) Approved the Ad-Hoc Committee's recommended Design and Development Standards for Victoria Avenue, and directed Staff to initiate a Zoning Code Amendment to establish an overlay zone for Victoria Avenue and adjoining properties;
- 2) Directed that the recommended Design and Development Standards be applied to new development along Victoria Avenue, as a matter of policy until overlay zone adoption; and
- 3) Directed Staff to begin the process to designate Victoria Avenue, excluding the travelled roadway, as a linear park.

Staff has implemented the 2003 City Council recommendation that rows of citrus be planted for new development along Victoria Avenue. However, other portions of the 2003 City Council recommendation have not been implemented. The City has not required that private properties adjacent to Victoria Avenue dedicate an easement that the City would maintain; the overlay zone has not been completed; and the linear park has not been designated. A summary of actions and policies pertaining to Victoria Avenue is provided in Attachment 2 of this Report.

DISCUSSION

Based on the Utility Services/Land Use/Energy Development Committee's direction, new policies, actions and environmental circumstances warrant a reconsideration of the 2003 Council direction for Victoria Avenue. The requirement for private property owners to grant the City an easement and plant three (3) rows of citrus adjacent to the Victoria Avenue right-of-way and the overlay zone are addressed in this Report.

This Report does not address the linear park along Victoria Avenue. The Parks, Recreation and Community Services Department (PRCSD) has hired a consultant, RJM Design Group, to conduct a citywide evaluation of City parks, and to prepare a Master Plan of Parks. The Master Plan of Parks establishes portions of Victoria Avenue as a park. Working with Victoria Avenue Forever (VAF), PRCSD will prepare recommendations for Victoria Avenue as much of the corridor is roadway, parkway and median and does not meet the public accessibility criteria needed for parks. Preliminary recommendations include park designation for pocket park areas along Victoria Avenue that would be maintained by the Public Works Department. The Master Plan of Parks is expected to be presented to VAF in the Fall of 2018 for their feedback.

Citrus Greening Disease (Huanglongbing)

Since 2003, citrus greening disease, also known as Huanglongbing, or HLB has become a threat to citrus throughout the State. First detected in California in 2008, HLB has impacted the citrus industry throughout the country, including a reduction in Florida's citrus production of more than 50% from the mid-1990s to the mid-2010s (244 million boxes down to 94 million boxes). Trees become infected with HLB, by the Asian Citrus psyllid (ACP), an insect that can transfer HLB to healthy trees after feeding on an HLB infected tree. There is no cure for a tree infected with HLB, and the tree will die within a few years. The citrus greening disease has been found in two trees within Riverside. These trees were removed by the California Department of Agriculture officials, and a State mandated quarantine has been put into place in portions of the City to prevent the spread of the disease. It is important to note that HLB only affects citrus varieties, and does not pose a human health concern.

Introducing more citrus trees in Riverside increases the risk of HLB, which could have negative impacts on the City's citrus industry and the City's character/heritage. Since Council's 2003 direction requires the citrus trees be planted on private property along Victoria Avenue, there is concern that if the trees become infected, the disease would be undetected. An infected tree could remain undetected for years with the disease spreading to orchards in the Greenbelt.

Alternative Tree Species

If the overlay zone is implemented as directed by City Council, with an HLB quarantine in place, the City would be requiring the planting of citrus trees along Victoria Avenue without a citrus alternative in place; which means it would be difficult for property owners to comply with the requirements of the overlay zone.

Staff has researched HLB and citrus alternatives, and the following should be considered before moving forward:

- **California Department of Food and Agriculture:** Given the HLB threat, the California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA) advises against introducing new citrus to the area. The CDFA recommendation should be considered when establishing tree planting requirements along Victoria Avenue with alternative species considered, including fruit-bearing or non-fruit bearing, providing they have a size and canopy similar to citrus trees.
- **Victoria Avenue Forever:** A Tree Inventory (Inventory) completed in 1992 by Victoria Avenue Forever (VAF) identified 90 different tree species, and over 3,000 individual trees along Victoria Avenue. The citrus species identified along Victoria Avenue is the Naval Orange (*Citrus sinensis*). The Inventory included recommendations for planting 26 new tree species along Victoria Avenue to enhance and infill areas where tree vacancies existed in the medians, and along parkways and right-of-ways. None of the additional 26 species included citrus. During a recent meeting with VAF board members, Staff was informed that certain non-citrus fruit trees in the 1992 Tree Inventory would not be appropriate alternatives to citrus, such as flowering stone fruit, and fruit trees in the Rose family, which are not drought tolerant, and are susceptible to insect pests. The VAF Inventory provides a starting place for considering alternative trees to citrus, from which Staff will work with VAF to identify non-citrus fruit tree alternatives that are drought and pest tolerant. VAF suggested fruit tree alternatives to citrus that the City may wish to consider include: Figs, Pomegranates, Persimmons, Apricots, and Plums.
- **Public Works Department:** After consulting with the City's Urban Forester, a few initial considerations for alternative trees were established:
 - If canopy/large shade trees are used, they should be planted in a single row instead of rows of three, as canopy trees grow differently than citrus trees, and require different maintenance.
 - If fruit bearing trees are considered as alternatives to citrus trees, such as apples, pears, peaches or apricots, then three rows of trees should be maintained.
 - The City should consult the California Department of Food and Agriculture, UCR, the Riverside-Corona Resource Conservation District, or the Citrus Research Board to finalize the list of trees if alternatives are considered.

Staff requests that the Land Use Committee re-evaluate the citrus policy, and consider options for planting of trees other than citrus along Victoria Avenue, before the overlay zone is created.

Historic Designation

Victoria Avenue is a designated City Landmark, and is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The Cultural Heritage Board must review any proposed requirements for planting trees along Victoria Avenue for a consistency determination. While the Street's designation identifies the historic value of the plantings within the street right-of-way, and highlight the street's citrus heritage, the designations do not establish what type of trees are acceptable for planting. The 1992 VAF Tree Inventory should serve as a guide for trees planted along Victoria Avenue.

Victoria Avenue Tree Maintenance

The Public Works Department currently maintains approximately 800 citrus trees along Victoria Avenue including watering, trimming, harvesting, gopher control, and spraying for ACP. The annual cost is approximately \$50,000, with ACP spraying accounting for 20% of the cost.

Since 2003, the City has required property owners to plant and maintain three rows of citrus trees along their Victoria Avenue frontage. As a condition of new development, these trees have been required in the right-of-way or on the owner's property. However, regardless of the location, the property owner is required to maintain these trees, not the City.

Proposition R and Measure C

In 1979, Proposition R was passed by the voters to reduce urban sprawl and preserve Riverside's citrus and agricultural lands, hills, arroyos and Victoria Avenue. Proposition R applied the Residential Agricultural Five Acre (RA-5) Zone to the City's Greenbelt. In 1987, Measure C was passed, which amended Proposition R and furthered the preservation of the City's citrus and agricultural lands, scenic hills, ridgelines, arroyos and wildlife areas. Measure C clarified that amendments to the RA-5 and RC zoned properties would require a vote of the people.

Measure C, amending Proposition R, did allow for the City to adopt policies, ordinance and resolutions that would implement the policy of promoting agriculture in the Greenbelt. Unfortunately, Proposition R and Measure C do not contain criteria for determining when an amendment furthers the interests of Proposition R and Measure C; therefore, while an overlay zone requiring the planting of three rows of trees along Victoria Avenue would be consistent with Proposition R and Measure C, it would still require voter approval.

The following language in Measure C supports the Council's policies to implement the planting of three rows of trees along Victoria Avenue:

- It shall be the policy of the City to promote and encourage agriculture as an essential industry and desirable open space;
- It is further declared to be the policy of the City to retain, wherever feasible, agricultural lands in private ownership and to encourage and assist the maintenance and formation of family farms, especially for farmers who live on their land. The City shall forthwith adopt such policies, ordinances, and resolutions as may be necessary to implement these policies;

- To further promote and preserve agricultural uses and agricultural lands in the City of Riverside, the City shall forthwith take any and all appropriate actions to carry out this measure;
- The City Council and all City agencies, boards, and commissions are hereby directed to take any and all actions necessary to carry out this initiative measure, including but not limited to, adoption and implementation of any amendments to the City General Plan, Zoning Ordinance, and/or City Code. This measure shall be implemented forthwith as a matter of the highest priority to the City. City Council may also adopt guidelines to implement and interpret this initiative measure, following public notice and public hearing, provided that any such guidelines shall be consistent with the provisions and intent of Measure C. Any such guidelines must be adopted by a two-thirds vote of the City Council.

Conclusion

In 2003 the City Council directed Staff to implement policies along Victoria Avenue that would require property owners fronting Victoria Avenue to plant three (3) rows of citrus trees and establish an overlay zone. The Council also directed staff to establish a linear park along Victoria Avenue under the Parks, Recreation and Community Services Department (PRCS).

Based on direction of the Utility Services/Land Use/Energy Development Committee and City Council:

1. Planning Staff requests direction on potentially moving forward with the overlay zone, including a ballot measure and potential alternate tree species in lieu of citrus, for Victoria Avenue. City Staff from Planning, PRCS and Public Works will prepare the design and maintenance standards for trees planted adjacent to and within the Victoria Avenue right-of-way. If the Committee authorizes alternative trees, Staff will work with Victoria Avenue Forever and use the tree inventory and alternatives they have identified for Victoria Avenue.
2. Staff also requests direction on the maintenance and irrigation of the three rows of trees on private property, within easements granted to the City. The City currently requires private property owners to maintain and irrigate the trees, but this responsibility could be transferred to the City. The tree maintenance should include the cost of Asian citrus psyllid (ACP) spraying, currently approximately \$10,000 annually, and other factors related to HLB, such as tree removal.

FISCAL IMPACT

There is no fiscal impact to develop the overlay zone, including the ballot measure and coordination on developing an alternative list of trees to be used along Victoria Avenue, based on the direction of the Utility Services/Land Use/Energy Development Committee and City Council.

If the Utility Services/Land Use/Energy Development Committee and City Council maintain that property owners are responsible for maintenance of trees planted on their frontage, there are no fiscal impacts to the General Fund. If the Committee's direction requires the City to assume tree maintenance responsibility, there would be a fiscal impact to the General Fund with increased costs associated with maintaining trees along Victoria Avenue property frontages. These costs could

vary depending on the increase in property frontage to be maintained, the number and types of trees, and type of maintenance (e.g., spraying for ACP vs. no spraying needed for alternative trees).

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Attachments:

1. City Council Policy on 2003 Victoria Avenue Ad-Hoc Committee Recommendations
2. Summary of City Actions and Policies
3. Presentation