



City of San Antonio

Agenda Memorandum

File Number:
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Agenda Item Number: 8

Agenda Date: April 17, 2024

In Control: Governance Committee Meeting

DEPARTMENT: Parks & Recreation Department

DEPARTMENT HEAD: Homer Garcia III

COUNCIL DISTRICTS IMPACTED: Citywide

SUBJECT:

Briefing on a City Council Consideration Request on a Oak Wilt Tree Replacement Program. (Parks and Recreation).

SUMMARY:

The Parks and Recreation Department will present a briefing on a City Council Consideration Request submitted by Councilwoman Marina Alderete Gavito, District 7, requesting City Staff to address the issue of oak wilt by means of using funds from the Tree Mitigation Fund to assist homeowners and neighborhoods in replacing oak trees lost by the disease. This briefing will allow an opportunity for input from Committee members.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

Oak wilt, a lethal fungal infection, targets and impairs the water transport system in oak trees. In Central Texas, oak wilt is pervasive, spreading through both above-ground and below-ground

mechanisms. Unfortunately, there is currently no cure for oak wilt, and available methods to manage and address the disease are limited and offer no guaranteed success.

In 2003, City Council approved an ordinance creating general requirements to help prevent and control the spread of oak wilt. Per the ordinance, all cuts or wounds on oak trees shall be painted within 30 minutes. Furthermore, the ordinance prohibits infected firewood from being brought into the city. Additionally, the ordinance also implemented a requirement that a tree maintenance license be obtained by any person/company in the business of conducting tree pruning.

In 2016, the City of San Antonio Parks and Recreation Department created an oak wilt prevention program and took specific steps to help reduce the spread of the disease. This entailed an education and outreach program that included a public service announcement, oak wilt management strategies, and informational door hangers to be provided to residents at the time of their bi-annual brush collection. The Parks and Recreation and Solid Waste Management Departments coordinated to adjust the collection cycles to ensure that the north and northwest side brush collections, where oak wilt is found within San Antonio, are avoided between February 1 and June 30, when the spread of the disease is most prevalent.

The Parks and Recreation Department manages the funds deposited into the Tree Mitigation Fund as part of the Tree Preservation Ordinance. These funds can be used to pay for the planting of trees on public or private properties. Currently, the Parks and Recreation Department provides tree planting programs for homeowners to add tree canopy using an equity-based approach prioritizing overall equity scores targeting communities of need including combating the urban heat island effect.

The City Council Consideration Request memo dated January 30, 2024, requests a program be created to assist in preventing the spread of the disease by helping residents and neighborhoods in San Antonio to replace infected oak trees with native non-oak trees after they have been removed.

ISSUE:

This item is for briefing purposes only.

FISCAL IMPACT:

This item is for briefing purposes only.

ALTERNATIVES:

This item is for briefing purposes only.

RECOMMENDATION:

In consultation with the Development Services Department, it is recommended this item be brought to the Planning and Community Development Committee for discussion and further guidance on program options to replace trees specifically for homeowners and neighborhoods challenged by oak wilt and which have experienced tree loss as a result.