



Honorable Mayor and Members of the Hermosa Beach City Council

APPROVE THE PROPOSED TREE REPLANTING PLAN FOR VALLEY PARK AND THE GREENBELT

(Public Works Director Joe SanClemente)

Recommended Action:

Staff recommends City Council:

1. Approve the tree replanting plan for Valley Park and the Greenbelt (**Attachment 3**);
2. Authorize an increase of \$15,000 to the annual project contingency for the landscape maintenance services contract with Merchants Landscape Services, Inc., increasing the total annual contingency from \$50,000 to \$65,000 for the remainder of the contract; and
3. Authorize the City Manager to approve contract amendments up to the amount of the revised contract contingency.

Executive Summary:

Staff proposes planting up to 52 new trees to replace the 26 trees that have been removed from Valley Park and the Greenbelt (**Attachment 1**). In July 2025, the City released a public statement that ten (10) dead, dying, or diseased trees at Valley Park were slated for immediate removal to ensure public safety. Eleven (11) trees were removed as part of that work effort and staff, with assistance from the City's landscape contractor and arborists, identified fifteen (15) additional trees that posed a safety risk and were removed.

Staff proposes replacing the removed trees at a 2 to 1 ratio using species selected by the City's certified arborists to suit the specific conditions of each site (**Attachment 2**).

Staff is seeking a \$15,000 increase in the contract spending authority with Merchants Landscape Services, Inc. to cover this additional work and ensure there is adequate spending authority remaining to address other as-needed services.

Background:

On July 23, 2025, the City released a public statement announcing the immediate removal of ten (10) dead, dying, and diseased trees at Valley Park during the week of July 28,

2025 to mitigate risk of limb loss or tree failure, and ensure public safety, and that the replacement with 20 trees would be discussed at the Public Works Commission. These ten (10) trees were removed due to poor health conditions and their proximity to locations where recent tree failures had occurred; one (1) additional tree was also removed due to proximity of the dead trees and structural integrity, posing potential safety risks in areas frequently used by the public. All trees were carefully inspected for the presence of actively nesting birds before the work proceeded; none were found. The removals were prompted by three (3) incidents in which large branches fell within the park. While no injuries were reported, staff proactively conducted a detailed inspection of the park to address any remaining hazards.

Concurrent with removal efforts for the first 11 trees, staff worked closely with the City's landscape contractor Merchants Landscape Services, Inc., their arborist, and the City's independent arborist to conduct a detailed inspection throughout Valley Park and along the Greenbelt, which identified fifteen (15) additional trees requiring removal. The tree removals were completed outside of the normal tree trimming schedule (October through January) due to the urgency to protect public safety in the busy parks. The decline in health of these 26 trees is attributed to multiple factors, including oversaturation of turfed areas that weakened root systems, species unsuited to site conditions, close planting spacing that suppressed growth, and infestations such as the Dotted Paropsine Leaf Beetle affecting eucalyptus trees.

Replanting Plan

Staff developed a replanting plan assuming a 2 to 1 replacement ratio. The City's certified arborist prepared a list of tree species appropriate for replanting at Valley Park and the Greenbelt, considering both turf and non-turfed conditions (**Attachment 2**). Staff reviewed these options and selected the tree species, and identified locations, reflecting the recommendations best suited for each site's conditions, long-term tree health, and maintenance requirements (**Attachment 3**). The proposed tree locations were selected near the areas of removal, to the greatest extent possible, with adjustments made to ensure proper spacing and site suitability; although staff is recommending alternative locations for some of the trees due to the tight existing tree canopy coverage and need for trees at other locations in the City. In some cases, replanting a new tree directly at a removal site is not feasible due to residual root systems or conflicts with utilities. For example, replanting a new tree at the former Ficus tree site, in front of the Rotary Club on Valley Drive, is not recommended because of the root zone impacts and proximity to overhead utilities.

One (1) of the removed trees is a palm tree located in front of the Community Center, for which staff does not recommend replacing with a similar 20-foot palm due to the high cost of approximately \$8,000 and history of this species not doing well in this location. Instead, staff recommends replanting two trees of a different species selected from the City's

certified arborist tree list at an alternate location as identified in the proposed planting plan.

Public Works Commission

At the September 17, 2025 Public Works Commission meeting, staff presented the tree replanting plan for review and consideration. The Commission was supportive of staff recommendations for the tree replanting plan, with the exception of one tree, near the intersection of Valley Drive and Gould Avenue, that could potentially obstruct vehicle sightlines. In response, staff adjusted the plan by relocating the proposed tree from that intersection to an alternative location.

Parks and Recreation Commission

Staff presented the revised tree planting plan at the Parks, Recreation, and Community Resources Advisory Commission meeting on October 7, 2025 for additional review and consideration. The Commission expressed support for the proposed plantings and provided a number of comments regarding potential future uses of Valley Park, including areas identified in the Bark for a Park report for a possible dog park, the area used for Shakespeare in the Park, the sandy hill on the west side of the park, and existing pathways along the Greenbelt. Staff reviewed these comments and confirmed that the suggested dog park areas did not overlap with any of the proposed planting sites. In response to the feedback regarding potential conflicts with Shakespeare in the Park and the sandy hill, six trees originally proposed for Valley Park were replaced with six new locations along the Greenbelt between 8th Street and Herondo Street.

During public comment, a resident offered to donate four Torrey Pines and two Medallion trees to the City to support the replanting efforts. The City’s certified arborist reviewed and approved the tree species and proposed locations.

Past Commission and Council Actions

Meeting Date	Description
<p><u>City Council</u> May 24, 2022</p>	<p>Staff presented the Award of a Contract for Landscape Maintenance Services to Merchants Landscape Services, Inc</p>
<p><u>Public Works Commission</u> September 17, 2025</p>	<p>Staff presented the tree replanting plan following the removal of trees at Valley Park and the Greenbelt to review and provide feedback.</p>
<p><u>Parks, Recreation, and Community Resources Advisory Commission:</u> October 07, 2025</p>	<p>Staff presented the tree replanting plan following the removal of trees at Valley Park and the Greenbelt to review and provide feedback</p>

Discussion:

The Hermosa Beach Municipal Code (HBMC) Chapter 12.36 only provides requirements for replacement of parkway trees and does not directly address replanting requirements for trees in City parks or medians; however, staff has generally followed the 2 to 1 replacement ratio for the replacement of trees in parks where possible. The proposed replanting plan utilizes a 2 to 1 planting ratio that would result in 52 replacement trees. **Attachment 3** details the proposed replanting plan, for consideration by City Council, that was developed by staff with input from the Public Works Commission and the Parks and Recreation Commission.

The City intends to retain a licensed tree contractor to source and plant the replacement trees which is estimated to cost \$450 to \$850 per tree, for a 24-inch box size tree, depending on the tree species, resulting in an anticipated overall cost of approximately \$20,700 to \$39,100 to plant 46 trees. The remaining 6 trees, pledged for donation are smaller than the 24-inch box size and will be planted by City crews.

Landscape Maintenance Contract

Citywide tree maintenance is overseen by the Public Works Department and is completed by the City's contractor, Merchants Landscape Services, Inc., who is responsible for the care of approximately 1,800 City-owned trees located in City parks, parkways, and center medians. The City continues to conduct additional inspections of City maintained trees at other locations throughout the City and may lead to further tree removals.

The removal of the twenty-six (26) trees totaled approximately \$15,000. A portion of the removals, specifically the dead trees, were covered under the base landscape maintenance contract with Merchants Landscape Services, Inc., while the diseased and declining trees required additional work beyond the scope of the existing contract and were paid through the contract contingency. At its May 24, 2022 meeting, the City Council awarded the landscape maintenance services contract to Merchants Landscape Services, Inc. in the amount of \$2,173,789 for a four-year term beginning July 1, 2022, and ending June 30, 2026, with an option to extend for one additional year. As part of this action, the Director of Public Works was authorized to establish a \$50,000 annual contingency over the contract term, to cover as-needed landscape work, and the City Manager was authorized to approve contract amendments up to the amount of the approved project contingency. Given the added costs associated with the diseased tree removals and the ongoing tree care needs, staff recommends increasing the annual project contingency by \$15,000 to ensure adequate funding is available to complete the necessary work while preserving flexibility for other as-needed landscape services under the contract. The Public Works Department regularly relies on this contingency amount to complete as-needed work.

Fiscal Impact:

The FY 25-26 City adopted budget includes \$80,000 for trees and as-needed tree services in the Public Works Administration budget; this is sufficient to cover the cost of the replacement trees and the requested increase in the contract contingency for Merchants Landscape Services, Inc.

Staff will transfer \$15,000 from the Public Works Administration budget to the Parks Contract Services account to accommodate the corresponding \$15,000 increase in the annual contingency (from \$50,000 to \$65,000) for the Merchants Landscape Services, Inc. contract, to cover the additional costs associated with the removal of diseased trees.

The increase in contingency ensures Public Works has the necessary flexibility to complete as-needed services under the existing contract during the fiscal year.

Contingency Modification Request				
Contingency	Current Authorized Contingency Amount	Modified Request Amount	FY 2025-26 Budget Dept. Account #	Total Revised Contingency Amount
Merchants Landscape Services, Inc.	\$50,000	\$15,000	001-6101-4201	\$65,000

Attachments:

1. List of Trees Removed
2. Certified Arborist Tree Species Recommendations for Replanting
3. Proposed Tree Planting Locations and Species Maps

Respectfully Submitted by: Karla Vargas, Assistant Engineer,

Concur: Saad Malim, City Engineer

Concur: Joe SanClemente, Public Works Director

Noted for Fiscal Impact: Henry Chao, Finance Manager

Concur: Brandon Walker, Administrative Services Director

Legal Review: Jason Baltimore, Interim City Attorney

Approved: Steve Napolitano, Interim City Manager