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NEWPORT BEACH

Public Works Department Monthly Activities Report

To: Parks, Beaches & Recreation Commission

From: Public Works Department

Michael Sledd, Deputy Public Works Director



Celebrating Arbor Day & 35 Years as a Tree City USA Community

On Friday, April 25, staff hosted an event at Mariners Park celebrating Arbor Day and 35 consecutive years of recognition as a "Tree City USA" community. In attendance were Mayor Joe Stapleton, Councilmember Erik Weigand, Parks, Beaches & Recreation Commission Vice Chair Anne Yelsey, Mariners Elementary School Principal Antoinette Coe, and the 3rd grade students, parents and teachers. After a proclamation by Mayor Stapleton, and a discussion of the benefits of trees, the students presented their Arbor Day-related artwork and poetry. Finally, the attendees helped plant five new trees at the park.

To earn Tree City USA recognition, cities must have a qualifying tree board or department, a public tree care ordinance, a community forestry program budget, and an Arbor Day observance and proclamation. The City also earned its 22nd Growth Award by demonstrating higher levels of tree care and community engagement during the year.

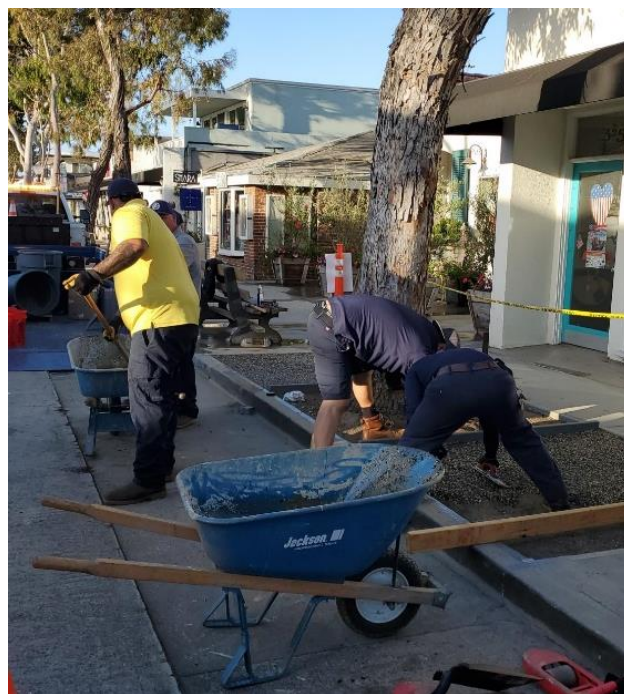




Pictured from left to right: Parks, Beaches & Recreation Commission Vice Chair Anne Yelsey, Mayor Joe Stapleton, Mariners Elementary School student and "Principal for the Day" Hallee Miller, Mariners Elementary School Principal Antoinette Coe, and City Councilmember Erik Weigand

Marine Avenue Tree Well Pilot Project

Urban trees provide many valuable benefits, but can clash with the built environment, including damaging curbs, gutters and sidewalks. While designing proper planting sites for new trees from a clean slate is relatively easy, established trees often present more limited options, and solutions can sometimes be limited. Historically, repairing these types of issues has often involved pruning the offending roots and replacing the sidewalk, when possible, to avoid needing to remove and replace trees. While some trees may tolerate the root pruning when it is far enough away from the tree or it is a particularly vigorous species (e.g. ficus trees), the issue is more delicate when pruning closer to the tree trunk or dealing with vulnerable tree species. When specific trees have high historic value or unique character for various reasons, this issue becomes even more complex.



Enlarging tree wells allows for more growth by established trees but can also create potential tripping hazards. Filling tree wells with things such as decomposed granite or mulch can eliminate that hazard but requires constant upkeep to maintain material in the wells. Tree grates can also be used but often require additional root pruning to retrofit the grates around trees, which further impacts tree health and potentially stability, and the grates themselves often need future modification or replacement to accommodate growing trees.



Given these issues, Public Works staff recently conducted a trial installation of a permeable pebble tree well around one of the Special City Landmark eucalyptus trees located along Marine Avenue. It is expected that this solution will solve several issues in that 1) no root pruning is necessary, 2) the pebble fill material with its binder is firm enough to support foot traffic and provides a trip-hazard-free surface, 3) the material is permeable so that rain and surface water can infiltrate into the tree's critical feeder root zone, and 4) the material does not break like concrete, whereby the whole slab needs replacing. Instead, the material fractures and can be picked out and replaced in small batches, which should provide a savings on long-term labor and material costs along with reducing impacts to the tree.

After the normal backfilling, grading and forming, the installation process required first washing of over 1,500 pounds of 3/8" Yosemite River pebble so that the binder would adhere well to the rock. Dozens of pre-filled 5-gallon buckets of washed pebble were then dumped into wheelbarrows and mixed with 16-oz of *EKO FLO™ Pebble Binder*. Once the materials were evenly mixed, staff emplaced the pebble/binder blend into the forms, much the same way concrete is emplaced, and leveled and finished to the existing grade. Unlike concrete, this material requires up to 72-hours of drying time, so barricades and warning devices were critical to preventing pedestrians from entering the work site.

If this trial is successful, we expect to see greater usage of this material surrounding our valuable Landmark City trees.



Special Tree Removals

A Special Landmark Canary Island date palm (*Phoenix canariensis*) at the Balboa Branch Library succumbed to what was most likely fusarium wilt, which commonly infects these species of palms. There is no known effective treatment for this disease that is essentially 100% fatal. The tree was removed as an emergency to prevent the massive head from potentially rotting and breaking off.



A Special Dedicated deodar cedar (*Cedrus deodara*) at Mariners Park was removed after a field inspection determined the tree's root ball had been compromised and made the tree unstable. The tree was dedicated to Dr. Anthony and Madeleine DeCarbo, and it will be replaced by another deodar cedar.



Trees Maintenance

During April 2025, Great Scott Tree Service (GSTS) trimmed broadleaf, palm, ficus and eucalyptus trees in Grids 14 (Balboa Island), 18 (Newport Heights) and 3 (Buffalo Hills). During the same period, GSTS responded to four tree-related emergencies and completed 13 service requests including creating defensive space for several fire-mitigation related projects.

Month of:	# of Trees Trimmed:	# of Trees Removed:	# of Trees Removed Because a Problem Tree:	# of Trees Planted:
April	2,243	64	1	31

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