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NEWPORT BEACH

PB&R Commission Staff Report

Agenda Item: **VII-A**
June 2, 2026

TO: Parks, Beaches & Recreation Commission

FROM: Municipal Operations Department
Zachary Gentry, Department Director
949 644-3055, zgentry@newportbeachca.gov

TITLE: Reforestation Request – 901 Chestnut Place

RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends that the Parks, Beaches and Recreation (PB&R) Commission approve the reforestation request of a Manna Gum Eucalyptus (*Eucalyptus viminalis*) located on the Alta Vista side of 901 Chestnut Place.

The applicant, Geoffrey Darby, residing at 901 Chestnut Place, has provided the required HOA board meeting minutes along with the HOA board signature of approval to remove and replace the tree. If approved by the Commission, the City will pay for the removal of the Manna Gum, while the applicant has offered to fund the replacement of the tree with two 48-inch box Jacaranda trees (*Jacaranda mimosifolia*).

DISCUSSION:

The applicant, Geoffrey Darby, residing at 901 Chestnut Place, contacted the City to request the removal of a Manna Gum Eucalyptus tree (*Eucalyptus viminalis*) located on the side of his home due to previous root damage, unbalanced canopy, limited scaffolding root structure on the street side and perceived elevated risk of a whole tree failure.

The subject tree has been taken to Commission by a previous applicant on two occasions, once in 2015, and in 2022. Commission denied the reforestation requests on both of those occasions. On the advice of staff, the new applicant and resident, Mr. Darby, hired a certified arborist to perform an advanced risk assessment to provide evidence of the tree's risk.

On March 31, 2026, a Level 3 risk assessment conducted by the applicant's consulting arborist reported that several surface roots had previously been cut, and the ground penetrating radar demonstrated the absence of structural roots on the street side of the tree. City staff confirmed both sidewalk (65 sq.ft.) and curb & gutter (21 linear feet) adjacent to the tree had been repaired in 2010. Additionally, the applicant's consulting arborist noted an unbalanced canopy, which was weighted away from the applicant's home. Staff noted that this was due to repeated clearance pruning on the side of the canopy facing the home.

The applicant's consulting arborist rated the tree's overall risk at the time of inspection as 'High', with the tree part of concern being the identified previous root pruning. For this reason, the arborist recommended the tree's removal. Additionally, the applicant's consulting arborist offered

alternative mitigation in the form of a crown reduction (via drop-crotching) of the overall height of the Manna Gum by 25%.

On April 23, 2026, at the direction of staff, the City's tree-trimming contractor performed the prescribed crown reduction via drop-crotching, reducing the canopy by approximately 25%. Additionally, City staff directed the City's on-call consulting arborist, Dudek, Inc. (Dudek), to perform a peer review of Mr. Darby's arborist's report and undertake their own Level 2 Tree Risk Assessment of the tree after mitigation measures had taken place. On April 28, 2026, Dudek performed an inspection to determine if the mitigation measures would lower the overall risk rating.

On May 13, 2026, staff received Dudek's report, which placed the overall risk rating at 'Moderate', but recommended removal within the next 12 months, because of the possible likelihood of failure during **extreme weather events**. This is a higher standard than normal, as annual Santa Ana wind events and winter storms are predictable in Newport Beach. However, the removal recommendation factors in the high likelihood of an extreme *El Niño* in the winter of 2026/2027, as predicted by forecasters.

Based on the consultants' findings, the Manna Gum meets the criteria for removal referenced in the City Council Policy G-1 and staff recommends the PB&R Commission approve the reforestation request of a Manna Gum. Due to the extraordinary cost of hiring a consulting arborist and its associated cost of ground penetrating radar, City staff offered some cost mitigation for removal and replacement. The City will pay for the removal of the Manna Gum, while the applicant has offered to fund the replacement of the tree with two 48-inch box Jacaranda trees (*Jacaranda mimosifolia*).

NOTICING:

Mr. Darby, Council Member Robyn Grant, and the Eastbluff Homeowners Community Association have received a copy of this report. The tree was posted with information regarding the Reforestation request and postcard notifications were sent by the City to property owners within 500 feet of the subject tree's location. The agenda item has also been noticed according to the Brown Act (72 hours in advance of the meeting at which PB&R Commission considers the item).

ATTACHMENTS:

- A. Reforestation Application
- B. Eastbluff Homeowners Community Association's approval letter.
- C. Tree Removal Report/Review
- D. Applicant's Level 3 Tree Risk Assessment Report.
- E. Dudek's Peer Review and Level 2 Tree Risk Assessment Report.
- F. Info Sheet - Jacaranda
- G. Map highlighting surrounding property owners notified of the Commission Meeting.