



Staff Report

File #: 19-27

Version: 1

Date: 1/28/2019

Item #: 6.a.

TO: Mayor and City Council

THROUGH: Steve Powers, City Manager

SUBJECT:

Removal of Street Trees on Division Street NE

Ward(s): 1

Councilor(s): Kaser

Neighborhood(s): CANDO

Service Area(s): Safe Community; Welcome and Livable Neighborhood; Safe and Reliable Infrastructure; Natural Environment Stewardship

ISSUE:

Removal of Street Trees on Division Street NE, between Liberty Street and High Street

RECOMMENDATION:

Information Only

SUMMARY:

Salem Revised Code Chapter 86.090(d) sets the process for removal of street trees by the City. Tree removal is a decision of the Public Works Director, who can refer specific cases to the Salem Parks and Recreation Advisory Board (SPRAB). SPRAB has been briefed on the street tree plan for the Police Station project, and the Liberty and Division Street improvements. SPRAB will be considering the tree plan, including the removal of street trees on Division Street NE between Liberty Street and High Street, at its March 14 meeting. The tree plan was referred to SPRAB because of the judgement needed to evaluate and balance trees and parking. Adding spaces to replace lost parking and meet new demand requires a choice between maintaining the existing tree canopy and meeting existing and future parking needs. Street trees are a community asset that can be easily planted and grown over time. Parking is also a community asset but it is more difficult and expensive to replace than trees.

Liberty and Division Streets will be improved as part of the Salem Police Station project. The improvements will reconfigure traffic, add bike lanes, and eliminate 20 on-street parking spaces on

Liberty Street NE. The parking spaces lost on Liberty Street will be replaced with angle parking spaces on Division Street NE, as well as adding ten spaces to meet increased parking demand in the area.

Street trees on the north and south sides of Division Street NE, between Commercial and Liberty Streets-abutting the Police Station-have already been, or will soon be, removed. This removal was permitted to address the visitor parking requirements of the future Police Station. Trees on Division Street, between Liberty and High Streets, are also planned for removal. Overall, the Police Station project, including the planned Liberty Street and Division Street improvements, will remove 29 trees and add 96 trees. There will be new street trees planted along Division and Commercial Streets and in the public plaza and on-site parking areas.

FACTS AND FINDINGS:

The street trees are proposed for removal to change existing 33 on-street parallel parking spaces on Division Street NE, to 63 diagonal parking spaces. Of the new diagonal on-street parking spaces, 31 will be located east of Liberty Street and 32 west of Liberty Street.

The City may remove street trees for projects or hazard abatement after a 15-day posting.

If City Council wishes to maintain the trees, the action would be to direct the City Manager to retain the parallel on-street parking.

An existing street tree map is provided as attachment 1. All of the trees to be removed are in fair or poor condition.

BACKGROUND:

A project update was provided to SPRAB on December 13, 2018 (attachment 2), and again on January 10, 2019 (Attachment 3). At the December meeting SPRAB requested that as many existing trees be saved as possible. At the January presentation staff illustrated how the project plans have been evolving to save as many of the existing trees as possible. The presentations to SPRAB continue the City's sharing of information to community stakeholders with an interest in the Police Station project. Police Station project presentations have consistently described changes in on-street parking and traffic flow.

Changes in Salem's downtown will bring hundreds of regular new visitors and residents to our downtown and significantly increase demand for existing parking spaces. There are currently nearly 200 apartment units either under construction or development review. Demand is projected to grow. Housing and jobs in the downtown core are key to increasing downtown vibrancy, both economically and as Salem's cultural and community center.

The City is actively supporting non-vehicular travel by making investments in new bike lanes, such as on Liberty Street NE and Division Street NE, and other bike, pedestrian, and trail connections. As

more people live, work, and visit downtown, the overall demand for parking will increase as the transition to alternative modes of travel will take a number of years.

An essential goal of the Police Station project is public safety. Parking spaces close to the Police Station for visitors, including victims of domestic violence, stalkers, or other types of abuse or threats to their personal safety, is part of providing public safety. One of the programmatic aspects of the plaza is to function as a safe exchange location for those who may have contentious custody arrangements, or who may be selling something on Craigslist and want a safe, visible location for that activity. Having to walk two or more blocks, particularly if these visits are after dark or if a trauma is recent, can be a barrier for people seeking help.

Attachments:

- 1.Existing Street Tree Map.
2. SPRAB Presentation, December 13, 2018
3. SPRAB Presentation, January 10, 2019