

#130714

June 16, 2014

To: City Commission of Gainesville, Florida

From: City Tree Advisory Board

Ivor Kincaide, Chair; Meg Niederhofer, Secretary; E.J. Bolduc; Joe Durando; Chris Kodadek

Subject: Reconstruction of SE 4th Street from Depot Ave to Williston Road

On June 9, 2014 the Tree Advisory Board was informed that all seven designs proposed for the reconstruction of SE 4th Street require the removal of five Heritage Live Oaks on the west side of the street. Heritage status is conferred on trees of high quality species that are 20" in diameter or larger. The Live Oaks in question are on the NW corner of SE 13th Avenue and 4th St (estimated at 35" in diameter). Proceeding south, estimated diameters of the Heritage Live Oaks 20", 38", 44" and 31". The latter two trees flank the sides of Sweetwater Branch and provide structural stability to the creek bank. The large canopies mean that rain falling on the crown is intercepted and therefore reaches the ground much more slowly than if the precipitation fell directly onto hardscape, ameliorating the impact on creek water quality during storm events.

Live Oaks are identified in the Gainesville Land Development Code as worthy of special consideration due to their environmental and aesthetic qualities. Their structural stability has been documented by University of Florida research which found them most likely of all tree species to withstand hurricane force winds, thus providing protection to buildings in their vicinity. The branches keep the winds well above roof levels, and they intercept wind-carried debris in the form of large limbs, metal siding, and signs, which hit the trees instead of walls and roofs.

In order to encourage preservation of trees like these Heritage Live Oaks, land development regulations require financial mitigation for their destruction during development or civic-improvement projects. The basic value of Heritage trees of high quality species is calculated at \$40/square inch, modified by a reduction factor because no tree is perfect. These provisions were established using the methodology of the Council of Tree and Landscape Appraisers as modified after lengthy discussions with local developers, University of Florida Development representatives, landscape architects, City Tree Advisory and City Beautification Boards, citizens representing a variety of local organizations, and City and GRU staff. The Tree Advisory Board estimates that the Heritage Live Oaks trees to be destroyed by the reconstruction of SE 4th Street would be valued at approximately \$100,000. The intention of this letter from the Tree Advisory Board is to remind the City Commission that the Metropolitan Planning Organization Design Guidelines require tree protection and planting just as they require bike lanes, sidewalks, and appropriate lane widths.

The Tree Advisory Board motion: "Chair Ivor Kincaide is authorized to prepare a letter to the City Commission, copied to the Director of City Public Works, urging that a plan for the reconstruction of SE 4th Street be developed that preserves the 5 Heritage Live Oaks in the public right-of-way on the west side, in the vicinity of Sweetwater Branch Creek and SE 13th Avenue. The letter should reiterate the policy of financial mitigation that shall be exacted if the trees are destroyed. Also, whatever plan is adopted should include the replanting of shade trees along the newly reconstructed SE 4th St. The Board understands that Public Works is working within very narrow right-of-way constraints. Perhaps the funds that would be used to mitigate the destruction of the Heritage trees could be used instead to acquire additional right-of-way from the undeveloped property directly across the street from the Heritage Live Oaks." (Motion: Joe Durando; second, E.J. Bolduc; unanimous).

On behalf of the Tree Advisory Board, I thank you for consideration of this matter.

Ivor Kincaide, Chair

