

CONSENT CALENDAR

December 11, 2018

To: Members of the City Council

From: Mayor Jesse Arreguin, Councilmember Cheryl Davila, Councilmember Ben Bartlett, and Councilmember Lori Droste

Subject: Establishment of Traffic Circle Policy Task Force

RECOMMENDATION

Establish a Traffic Circle Policy Task Force comprised of representatives of the Parks and Waterfront Commission, Transportation Commission, community representatives from the neighborhoods where traffic circles are located, and city staff in the Parks and Public Works Departments as follows:

- **City Staff**
 - 1 representative from the Transportation Department
 - 1 representative from the Parks Department
- **Commissions**
 - 1 representative from the Parks and Waterfront Commission
 - 1 representative from the Transportation Commission
- **Community**
 - Several representatives from the neighborhoods currently maintaining traffic circles, chosen from geographically diverse parts of the city
 - 1 representative from Berkeley Partners for Parks

The charge of this Task Force is to:

- a) Evaluate the City's current traffic circle vegetation policy; and
- b) Conduct a community led process to update that policy to ensure pedestrian/bicycle/vehicle safety and preserve community efforts to beautify traffic circles.

Task Force activities may include, but are not limited to:

- Determine appropriate characteristics and parameters for allowed plantings;
- Develop policy that ensures lines of sight and other important safety considerations;
- Conducting a survey of current traffic circles and their vegetation;
- Conducting a survey of neighborhood associations, neighborhood captains, community and community groups such as Berkeley Partners for Parks to determine which traffic circles are being maintained by community members;
- Examining the City of Oakland's 'Adopt a Spot' initiative to encourage community involvement in the maintenance of public spaces by loaning tools, supplies, and technical assistance to committed members of the community;
- Hosting a presentation from City staff to better understand concerns with the current traffic circle policy and any safety concerns that should be taken into consideration;
- Developing a clear set of guidelines/criteria to allow for community maintenance of traffic Circles;
- Outlining the appropriate community outreach strategy and process to share the updated policy for managing vegetation in traffic circles;
- Developing a replanting strategy, with emphasis on drought-resistant plants.

BACKGROUND

In the summer of 2018 in response to a legal settlement agreement, the Public Works Department provided notice to all neighbors responsible for the maintenance of traffic circle vegetation, informing them that the City will be removing trees and other large vegetation that obscures line of sight and poses a safety risk.

This communication elicited significant concern in the community and there was a desire for more outreach and engagement of neighborhood traffic circle volunteers in decisions on removing vegetation and on updates to the policy. The current 2012 policy prohibits vegetation over 2 feet in height, yet there are many trees that exceed 2 feet in traffic circles. There is a need to update the existing Traffic Circle planting and maintenance policy to reflect current conditions and to ensure ongoing maintenance to improve safety at these intersections.

On August 8, 2018, the Mayor, Councilmembers and City staff held a well-attended meeting where many of the traffic circle volunteers attended along with Berkeley Partners for Parks. There was a strong desire for a more formal process to engage neighborhood volunteers and other stakeholders in updating the current Traffic Circle policy.

On September 25, 2018, the City Council unanimously referred to the Parks and Transportation Commissions to create a city/community task force on Traffic Circle vegetation maintenance. Since the Council's referral, the Parks Commission was informed that they do not have the authority to establish a Task Force, and that Council action is required. This item would authorize the creation of a city/community task force.

A stakeholder task force would be the most strategic, effective, and appropriate approach to respect and respond to the community's substantial interest in, and continuing care for the circles. The City has partnered with its citizens for their stewardship for almost two decades. Now is the ideal time to revisit, enhance and formalize that partnership, to support community involvement and work together to address important safety concerns. To help meet the spirit and desired follow up of the August 8th community meeting, it is important for community members to have representatives actively participating in and contributing to discussions about the traffic circles.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Costs associated with staffing the Traffic Circle Task Force, hosting community meetings and developing a new Traffic Circle Planting Policy.

ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

Supports the City's Climate Emergency Declaration, the City's Climate Action Plan and commitment to Vision Zero.

CONTACT PERSON

Mayor Jesse Arreguin (510) 981-7100