



STAFF REPORT

---

8/26/2025

---

**AGENDA ITEM**

**TO: HONORABLE MAYOR  
AND MEMBERS OF THE CITY COUNCIL**

**FROM: CARLO TOMAINO  
CITY MANAGER**

**BY: THOMAS BEKELE  
PUBLIC WORKS DIRECTOR/CITY ENGINEER**

**SUBJECT: PUBLIC WORKS CONTRACT WITH KORMEX CONSTRUCTION, INCORPORATED  
FOR THE STREET TREE PLANTING PROJECT (PROJECT NO.90.25012)**

**Summary:**

The City Council adopted the 2023 Street Tree Master Plan (STMP) to restore and expand the City's urban forest canopy. Following the adoption of the STMP, the United States Forest Service, a federal agency under the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), offered competitive grants for urban forestry projects nationwide with a focus on tree planting and maintenance. In alignment with the goals of the STMP, the City applied for one of these grants to support the Street Tree Planting Project. On September 14, 2023, the USDA awarded the City a \$1,000,000 grant for the Street Tree Planting Project. To ensure compliance with federal grant terms and proper use of the awarded funds, the City Council approved a grant agreement on August 27, 2024, with GreenLatinos, a national pass-through partner for the USDA Forest Service.

On July 11, 2025, the City issued a Notice Inviting Bids for Phases II and III, which includes tree planting and a 90-day establishment period. The scope of work includes tree tagging, site preparation, soil amendments, installation of 511 trees, and initial watering and maintenance. Following a competitive bidding process, staff recommends awarding a Public Works Contract to Kormex Construction, Incorporated (Kormex), the lowest responsive and responsible bidder, for a term of 6 months and a not-to-exceed amount of \$365,500. If approved, Kormex would begin the planting phase in September 2025 and conclude by December 2025, followed by a 90-day maintenance period ending in March 2026.

**Strategic Plan Goal(s):**

Goal No. 1 Financial Stability: Ensure the City's long-term financial stability and resilience.

Goal No. 4 Infrastructure: Maintain and improve the City's physical infrastructure, water system, and recreational spaces.

Recommendation:

1. Authorize the City Manager to enter into a Public Works Contract with Kormex Construction, Incorporated for the Street Tree Planting Project, for a term of 6 months and a not-to-exceed contract amount of \$365,500, in a form approved by the City Attorney; and
2. Authorize a 10% contingency of \$36,550 and up to a 60 calendar-day extension to accommodate additional scope of work, scope of work changes, or unforeseen conditions, to be utilized if approved by the Public Works Director, for a total construction budget of \$402,050.

Fiscal Impact:

The City's Capital Improvement budget allocates a \$1,000,000 USDA grant for the Street Tree Planting Project (Project No. 90.25012). The proposed contract amount for Phase II and part of Phase III is \$365,550. With a 10% contingency included, the total construction budget is \$402,050, which will be fully funded through the USDA grant.

Background:

On February 28, 2023, the City Council adopted the 2023 STMP to restore and expand the urban forest canopy in areas with low tree cover, while actively engaging residents in community forestry efforts. The STMP aims to increase resilience to heat, flood, and storm events; improve public wellness and recreational opportunities; and reduce greenhouse gas emissions and air pollutants in disadvantaged communities within Signal Hill. Key components of the STMP include:

- Updating the City's inventory of vacant tree well sites
- Conducting community outreach at City events and through online surveys to gather input on tree species preferences
- Developing a location-based street tree palette and selection procedures
- Providing planting and watering guidelines
- Revising spacing requirements for new trees near utilities in the public right-of-way

Following the adoption of the STMP, the City amended Section 12.05.040 of the Signal Hill Municipal Code to incorporate the plan's policy goals and pursued grant funding. On June 3, 2023, the City applied for federal funds under the Community Forestry Inflation Reduction Act Notice of Funding Opportunity. Offered under the authority of the Cooperative Forestry Assistance Act of 1978, these competitive grants support the planting and maintenance of urban trees to improve forest health and enhance public well-being in cities nationwide.

On September 14, 2023, the USDA awarded the City a \$1,000,000 grant for the Street Tree Planting Project. Subsequently, on August 27, 2024, the City Council approved a grant agreement with GreenLatinos, a national pass-through partner of the USDA Forest Service, to administer the grant and ensure compliance with all funding requirements. The Street Tree Planting Project is composed of three phases: planning and implementation, tree planting, and tree establishment.

On November 12, 2024, the City Council approved a professional services agreement with SWA to

carry out Phase I of the Street Tree Planting Project. This phase included conducting a street tree survey, selecting appropriate tree species, preparing planting plans and technical specifications, and leading community outreach efforts. SWA surveyed and assessed all tree locations within the project limits, identifying 511 suitable planting sites based on STMP criteria and considering proximity to utilities, including fire hydrants, water meters, light poles, and power poles. Using the STMP as a guide, SWA selected species appropriate to each location and obtained nursery quotes for tree procurement. SWA also provided illustrative renderings to help visualize proposed streetscapes.

SWA completed a bid-ready plan set in early July 2025. SWA will continue to support the City during the subsequent planting and establishment phases. The Street Tree Planting Project targets three disadvantaged block groups identified through EJScreen data: 060375734022, 060375734023, and 060375734024. These groups experience high environmental and health burden indexes. The work limits encompass neighborhoods located west of Cherry Avenue, north of Pacific Coast Highway, and east of Walnut Avenue, stretching across the designated block groups shown in Map 1 of the grant documentation (Attachment A).

The scope of work for the Street Tree Planting Project includes the following:

- Tagging 511 City-procured 24" box trees at selected nurseries, to be completed within 14 calendar days of the Notice to Proceed.
- Sending construction notification letters to the affected residents within two weeks of the planting activities and outlining the projected project schedule.
- Removing approximately 2,000 square feet of concrete to create new 4' x 6' tree wells.
- Installing 511 trees in parkways, medians, and existing or new tree wells, in accordance with City standards and project specifications.
- Watering and maintaining all trees for a 90-day establishment period.

Phase II of the Street Tree Planting Project, which includes tree planting, is scheduled to commence in September 2025 and is anticipated to last approximately 90 calendar days. Following completion of planting, the selected Contractor would provide a three-month watering and maintenance period.

After this initial maintenance phase, the City plans to transition watering and maintenance responsibilities to its existing landscape maintenance contractor, the Conservation Corps of Long Beach (CCLB), as outlined in the grant agreement with GreenLatinos. Additionally, as provided in Section 12.05.030 of the Signal Hill Municipal Code, property owners will be responsible for the ongoing care and watering of street trees adjacent to their properties after the three-month establishment period has concluded.

#### Analysis:

On July 11, 2025, the City issued a Notice Inviting Bids for the second and third phases (partially, as the 3-year watering would be performed as a separate contract) of the Street Tree Planting Project. The Public Works Department posted the Notice Inviting Bids on July 11, 2025, in the following locations:

- PlanetBids via the City's online portal
- City's public notice locations as identified in Signal Hill Municipal Code Section 1.08.010

---

8/26/2025

---

- City website

The following table lists the bids received by the 2:00 p.m. deadline on August 1, 2025:

<b>Contractor</b>	<b>Bid Total</b>
Kormex Construction, Incorporated	\$365,500
FS Contractors Incorporated	\$441,170
West Coast Arborist Incorporated	\$477,450
Marina Landscape Incorporated	\$726,560

Kormex, the lowest bidder, submitted all required documents before the bid deadline. Staff verified that Kormex holds the necessary licenses to perform the proposed work under this contract. Staff also conducted reference checks on the company's listed projects in the Statement of Qualifications, confirming Kormex as the lowest responsive and responsible bidder. Staff recommend awarding a contract to Kormex to complete the next phases of the project (Attachment B).

Pending the City Council's approval, staff will issue a Notice to Proceed and begin coordinating with the Contractor. If approved, the Street Tree Planting Project is estimated to start in September 2025, with the planting phase expected to be completed by December 2025. Tree watering and maintenance will continue for a period of 90 days following the completion of planting.

Reviewed for Fiscal Impact:

---

Siamlu Cox

Attachments:

- A. Blockgroups Map
- B. Public Works Agreement with Kormex