



STAFF REPORT

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11/12/2024

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**AGENDA ITEM**

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

**FROM: CARLO TOMAINO  
CITY MANAGER**

**BY: THOMAS BEKELE  
PUBLIC WORKS DIRECTOR**

**SUBJECT: PROFESSIONAL CONSULTANT SERVICES WITH SWA GROUP FOR THE  
PREPARATION OF THE STREET TREE PLANTING PROJECT**

**Summary:**

The City Council adopted the 2023 Street Tree Master Plan (STMP) to restore and expand the City's urban forest canopy. Following adoption of the STMP, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Forest Service offered competitive grants for urban forestry projects nationwide, focusing on tree planting and maintenance. On September 14, 2023, the USDA awarded the City a \$1,000,000 grant as a sub-awardee for the Street Tree Planting - Federal Project (Project). This project is divided into three phases including planning and implementation, tree planting, and tree establishment. The City's goal is to plant 594 new trees consistent with the STMP guidelines. On August 27, 2024, the City Council approved a \$1 million grant agreement with GreenLatinos, a national pass-through partner for the USDA Forest Service. GreenLatinos will collaborate with the City throughout the Project to ensure compliance with grant terms and the appropriate use of awarded funds.

Staff issued a Request for Proposals (RFP) to select a qualified consultant to assist with the planning and implementation phase of the Project. Staff advertised the opportunity and received one proposal from SWA Group, which has extensive experience as a landscape architecture firm. In addition to assessing the suitability of all planting sites, selecting appropriate locations in line with STMP guidelines, and obtaining quotes from nurseries for tree procurement, the consultant will also support the City during subsequent planting and establishment phases. GreenLatinos also requested the City conduct an expanded community engagement process; SWA Group's scope of services includes costs associated with providing more information to the community. Staff recommends awarding the contract to SWA Group for these services.

**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 public infrastructure, water system, and recreational spaces.

Recommendation:

Authorize the City Manager to enter into a Public Works Contract with SWA Group, for a term of 12 months, not-to-exceed contract of \$100,000.00, in a form approved by the City Attorney.

Fiscal Impact:

Funding for this project is included in the FY 2024-25 Capital Improvement Budget. The Street Tree Planting - Federal Project (No. 90.25012), funded by the USDA has a total project budget of \$1,000,000; a total amount of \$100,000.00 will be utilized for Phase 1 of this project.

Background:

On February 28, 2023, the City Council, adopted the 2023 Street Tree Master Plan (STMP). The purpose of the STMP is to restore and expand urban forest canopy in areas with low tree cover, while engaging residents in community forestry efforts. The goals of this effort are to increase the resilience of heat, flood, and storm events; increase wellness and recreational opportunities; and reduce greenhouse gas and air quality pollutants across disadvantaged communities within Signal Hill; key components of the plan include:

- Updating the City's inventory of existing vacant tree well sites.
- Community outreach at City events, and online surveys to engage residents and gather feedback on tree species preference.
- An updated street tree palette and comprehensive procedures for selecting tree types at each location.
- Guidelines for planting and watering new trees.
- Updated planting and maintenance guidelines, including revised tree spacing requirements in relation to existing utilities within the City right-of-way.

The City Council approved an amendment to the STMP Ordinance (Section 12.05.040 of the Signal Hill Municipal Code) to incorporate its policy goals into the municipal code.

On September 14, 2023, the USDA awarded the City a \$1,000,000 grant as a sub-awardee for the Street Tree Planting - Federal Project (Project). The Street Tree Planting Project is structured into three phases planning and implementation, tree planting, and tree establishment. The tree establishment phase involves planting 594 new trees in alignment with the latest STMP guidelines. On August 27, 2024, the City Council approved a grant agreement with GreenLatinos, a national pass-through partner for the USDA Forest Service. GreenLatinos will collaborate with the City throughout the Project to ensure compliance with grant terms and the appropriate use of awarded

funds.

Analysis:

As noted above, the City will plant 594 trees which will require multiple phases to complete. Phase 1 of the Project requires the assessment and suitability of all identified planting sites. The selected consultant will select appropriate locations in line with STMP guidelines, recommend trees suitable for planting, and obtain quotes from nurseries for tree procurement. The consultant will also support the City during subsequent planting and establishment phases. Importantly, the selected consultant will also conduct community outreach including creating marketing materials, providing a visual rendering depicting the trees on each street, and creating a map depicting the tree species and their respective locations.

Consistent with the City's Purchasing Guidelines, contracts above a certain threshold require City Council approval. On October 7, 2024, staff issued a Request for Proposal (RFP) for the preparation of the Street Tree Planting Project. The City posted the RFP at the following locations:

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

Staff sent notifications to prospective proposers through the City's electronic bidding system; 22 prospective proposers downloaded the contract documents. Proposals in response to this RFP were due to the City on October 25, 2024, at 1:00 pm.

Proposal Opening and Evaluation Process

The City received one (1) proposal from SWA Group by the deadline. Staff verified the proposal was complete and in compliance with City requirements. Staff conducted reference checks, confirming this firm has the required certifications and experience to perform the work under this agreement.

Recommendation

SWA Group has 64 years of experience in the industry and has successfully worked with similar projects with the cities of Agoura Hills, Goleta, and Thousand Oaks. With respect to this Project, SWA Group prepared the latest version of the STMP, including key policies components, outreach, and preparing renderings to help visual the project. SWA Group currently assists the City with landscape architecture services for other projects on an on-call basis. Staff believes SWA Group is well qualified to perform the work.

The proposed professional services agreement with SWA Group includes all elements of work associated with the first phase of the Project and ongoing support, as needed, with future implementation phases. Additionally, prior to selecting the consultant, staff conferred with the granting agency (GreenLatinos) for additional feedback. Additional community feedback will include renderings of each street to better inform the public's understanding of the Project in their own neighborhoods. Based on the City's prior experience working to install 200 trees, staff believes the proposed cost for this phase is reasonable. The proposed contract would enable Project to advance

with additional support and provide staff with a greater opportunity to focus on other capital projects.

Staff evaluated the proposed fee and negotiated adjustments with the consultant to ensure the completeness of the scope of services, and the reasonableness and competitiveness of the fees. The total not-to-exceed cost of \$100,000 is deemed reasonable based on the agreed-upon anticipated work and is consistent with staff's estimates.

Staff worked with the City Attorney's office to prepare the attached professional services agreement with SWA Group. The proposed contract term is for one-year with a not-to-exceed cost of \$100,000; this amount is entirely grant funded and the City's Capital Improvement Projects budget includes sufficient funds to support this activity

Reviewed for Fiscal Impact:

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Sharon del Rosario

Attachment:

A. Professional Services Agreement with SWA Group