



**CITY of CALABASAS**  
**CITY COUNCIL AGENDA REPORT**

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**DATE:** AUGUST 14, 2020

**TO:** HONORABLE MAYOR AND COUNCILMEMBERS

**FROM:** ROBERT YALDA, P.E., T.E., PUBLIC WORKS DIRECTOR/CITY ENGINEER  
ALBA LEMUS, E.I.T., ASSOCIATE CIVIL ENGINEER

**SUBJECT:** VALMAR MEDIAN LANDSCAPING UPDATE

**MEETING DATE:** AUGUST 26, 2020

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**SUMMARY RECOMMENDATION:**

This is an informational item as City staff is looking for comments and guidance from the Council.

**BACKGROUND:**

By way of background, the Old Topanga Canyon Gateway project was presented to the Traffic and Transportation Commission on June 18, 2018. The project included the construction of two center medians with drought tolerant plants for the landscaping and a gateway monument sign. The two medians were constructed in the summer of 2018 as part of the City's annual street resurfacing project. The landscaping and one monument were installed in December 2018. The trees were hand-watered until establishment was achieved. On June 4, 2019, City staff had three boulders installed in front of the monument and planted drought tolerant plants to improve the aesthetics of the medians. In addition, City staff returned and planted additional drought tolerant plants on April 14, 2020.

Staff was limited in the design of the medians due to water availability and lack of funding for the project. There currently is no reclaimed or potable water service available within the immediate proximity of the location. The closest available potable

water service is from the Las Virgenes Water District. However, per State regulations potable water cannot be utilized for median landscaping. The only option would be to bring in a reclaimed water line to the medians. City staff found that there are two points of connections available for use. One would require a County of Los Angeles permit, County of Los Angeles Health Department approval and a permit, and an on-site biologist from the Department of Fish and Wildlife because the connection would cross a fresh water source (Arroyo Creek). The second option would necessitate trenching over 1,200 yards and require several of the same permits stated above. Both of these options were found to be extremely expensive with a minimum cost of \$140,000.

Typically, the City uses funds from an established Landscape Maintenance District (LMD) to help offset costs for these types of projects, including maintenance, once completed. These LMDs then continue to contribute on-going funds to help maintain these landscape areas within the respective districts, and this is how the City is able to maintain a number of publicly landscaped areas within the community. Presently, the area where the medians on Valmar Road are located has no established LMD to help contribute funds for a reclaimed water source or regular maintenance services. Therefore, at the time these medians were constructed the decision was made to plant low maintenance native trees that required little to no maintenance.

#### **DISCUSSION/ANALYSIS:**

The City is able to maintain and provide more robust landscaping in other areas within the City because those areas have established LMDs. The LMDs contribute monies to cover the costs to maintain the landscaping within the respective LMDs.

City staff has estimated that to construct a reclaimed water line on Valmar, the cost would approximate \$140,000. Additionally, it is projected that annual maintenance costs would total between \$16,000 and \$18,000. Presently, the FY 2020-21 City budget does not provide funding for these costs.

While the City consistently receives inquiries in regard to the maintenance and beautification of these medians, historically residents have been advised that this particular area does not have an active LMD. Additionally, staff has undertaken outreach to this neighborhood area from time to time exploring the option and viability of establishing a new LMD to serve the area; however, this has been met with little or no support from residents.

Notwithstanding the above, staff continues to search for any available grants/monies from various agencies that can be utilized to offset costs to install reclaimed water service for these medians. Otherwise, the only remaining option to address this

situation is to undertake a budget adjustment to account for the costs associated with further improvements.

Staff would note that extensive weeding and maintenance was recently devoted to the medians. Staff will continue such maintenance to ensure that the overall appearance of the medians is maintained over time.

**FISCAL IMPACT/SOURCE OF FUNDING:**

As noted above, City staff has estimated the one-time construction cost to install a reclaimed water line is approximately \$140,000. With enhanced landscaping, it is projected that annual maintenance costs would run between \$14,000 to \$16,000.

**REQUESTED ACTION:**

That the City Council consider the information presented in this report and provide direction as deemed appropriate.