

Memorandum

Public Works Department

DATE: September 1, 2016

TO: Mayor and City Council

FROM: Isaac Chavira, Transportation Maintenance Manager (350-8349)
Shelly Seyler, Deputy Public Works Director – Transportation (350-8854)

THROUGH: Don Bessler, Public Works Director (350-8205)

SUBJECT: Right-of-Way (ROW) Landscape Update
September 8, 2016 City Manager’s Announcements

In June 2013, Public Works staff presented to the Council a plan for reinvestment in the right-of-way landscape adjacent to arterial roadways in Tempe. In FY 2014, improvements were completed at three demonstration sites in the city, which were used to guide discussions regarding ongoing investments in the ROW Landscape Program. Following the initial year of investment, staff identified areas for investment in FY 2015, which was the second year of installing landscape under the new program guidelines. At the September 8 Council meeting, staff will provide an update on the progress of the program.

Background

The city currently has 6.2 +/- million square feet of city rights-of-way under operational control. This represents approximately 35% of Tempe medians and linear frontage along the city’s arterial ROW’s. The remaining ROW is under regulatory control and improvements/maintenance are the responsibility of the adjacent property owners/management companies.

Over the last three fiscal years, based on direction received from the Council, staff spent just under one million dollars on ROW improvements throughout the city. In August 2015, staff provided Council with an update and included before and after pictures showing the improvements made. Additional information regarding staff’s completion of an inventory assessment, the landscape maintenance and investment budget and prioritization of the ROW’s is included below.

A. Rights-of-Way Evaluation

In late 2010, staff completed a ROW Landscape Program Inventory and Assessment. This assessment analyzed the existing conditions of the ROW’s under the city’s operational control. The scoring system assigned a 1 to 8.75 rating, with an 8.75 score representing the best conditions.

B. Landscape Maintenance and Existing Budget

Public Works currently manages the city controlled right-of-way utilizing a contract to perform routine maintenance which is generally done at a Service Level 2 and includes “rake and clean” maintenance with limited trimming and irrigation repair. The current budget for operations and maintenance of the ROW is approximately \$746,000 annually. This does not include the \$400,000 which was budgeted in FY 2016 and FY 2017 for capital reinvestment. This does include the cost of the contract, a very limited budget capital reinvestment for damaged material, water, chemical and irrigation supplies, as well as,

a contracted services budget for weed control, pest control, and other needed repairs to keep the system operational.

C. Reinvestment Prioritization System

To establish a method of determining the city's financial commitment, staff as part of the initial study efforts, evaluated the estimated cost of improvements and basic scope of work in three tiers.

Tier A was categorized as the highest design intent and visual impact intended to be used in the downtown, major entry points and high impact areas such as ASU, the research park, Rio Salado and the TCA or other major facilities. Design elements included uniform or monoculture plantings that complement the area architecture or adopted streetscape plans. Finished surfaces could range from DG to hardscape.



Tier B was categorized as moderate design intent and standard visual impact intended to be implemented at minor entry points and along arterial roadways with higher volumes/use.



Tier C was categorized for areas with the lowest design intent and visual impact intended to be implemented along arterial roadways with lower volume/use. Tier C is the lowest level of investment; however these areas would meet the minimum code requirements for quantity of trees and ground cover.



ROW Reinvestment

Below are pictures taken in August 2016 of investment areas done in the first, second and third year, which illustrates the growth that occurs after just a few years. As time goes on, we expect the landscape to mature and provide a greater visual benefit to residents and users.

Warner Road east of I -10: After 3 Months of Growth



Baseline and I-10: After 3 Months of Growth



McClintock Drive and US-60: After 1 Year of Growth



McClintock Drive north of Guadalupe Road: After 2 Years of Growth



Broadway Road and I-10: After 3 Years of Growth



Next Steps

Based on the current approved budget for FY 2016, staff intends to continue making improvements to the ROW's under city operational control, and have identified the following criteria and locations for reinvestment. Staff also recognizes that some conclusions and improvements can be made to how we reinvest in projects going forward based on feedback already received from the Council and public.

The criteria used to determine proposed sites for FY 2016 and going forward are:

- utilizing evaluation data from the *2010 ROW Landscape Program Inventory and Assessment* to target areas with lowest scores;
- performing visual inspections to review low score areas for current conditions;
- targeting low score areas that staff believes would have the next greatest visual impact, and
- addressing areas where assets have a history of failure.

Moving forward staff plans to improve and revitalize the landscaping at the following locations:

1. Broadway from Rural to McClintock
2. Elliot from McClintock to Price
3. Rural from Rio Salado to University
4. Warner and I-10 (south side)

Attachments

- Powerpoint
- Levels of Investment Map

Levels of Investment

