

# Santiago Hills Assessment District (SHAD)

## Landscape Renovation Community Meeting



Chapman Hills Elementary School

August 30, 2017

### Summary Report

On Wednesday, August 30, 2017, from 6:30 pm to 8:30 pm, the City of Orange Community Services Department conducted a Community Meeting at Chapman Hills Elementary School to discuss proposed landscape renovations in the Santiago Hills Assessment District (SHAD). The purpose of the meeting was to A) review landscape renovation plans for Skylark Place and Handy Creek Paseo; B) discuss and review plant material options; and C) gather input to determine community consensus.

SHAD residents were notified of the community meeting through mailings sent to 1,574 properties, online postings on the Nextdoor social media site and the City of Orange website, emailed meeting notice flyers, and signs posted within the District.

#### **Meeting Format**

Meeting agendas were provided to all attendees upon arrival (copy attached). One hundred thirty-four individuals signed in at the meeting and approximately 150 people attended. The meeting was initiated with a welcome and introductions by Bonnie Hagan, the Community Services Director. Dana Robertson, Parks and Facilities Manager, gave a brief history and general background of SHAD. Don Equitz, Senior Landscape Coordinator, provided an overview of the general landscape concept for the District and provided details on the proposed Handy Creek Paseo design, the Trails End Project, and the proposed Skylark project. Attached is a copy of the PowerPoint presentation.

Following the presentation, the audience participated in a 'Question and Answer' session.

After the discussion, meeting attendees had the option to participate in a tabletop exercise which involved identifying favorable and unfavorable preferences for plantings to serve as an alternative to the meadowgrasses plantings. Participants expressed their opinions by placing a green or red sticker on pictures of the planting alternatives. The green sticker signified a favorable preference while a red dot signified an unfavorable preference. Plant samples in one gallon containers were also available for inspection. Attached is a summary of the results of this exercise.

#### **Community Input and Feedback**

The following priorities, wish lists, issues, concerns and desires were recorded during the interactive discussion with meeting attendees:

- Maintaining turf was identified as a priority for the community. Many individuals expressed their preference to keep a majority of the turf for active use, particularly for dog walkers in the community.

- Several expressed a desire to eliminate meadowgrass from current and future renovations with particular interest to remove meadowgrass from the current Trails End area before moving forward with other projects.
- The Skylark project was identified as a priority to several individuals due to removal of landscaping at that location, but there was no consensus on if the project should adhere to the current design plan. It was clear meadowgrass is not a preferred planting.
- Specific comments pertaining to disliking the proposed plant palette and recommendations for altering the design according to individual preferences were shared.
- Many expressed that the City should not move forward with any renovations until there is a consensus from the community on landscape renovations.
- Many expressed that the committee process has not been effective and does not represent the community's desires.
- General comments were made about a preference for smaller renovation projects or replacing plants as needed rather than larger renovation projects. Another suggestion was to eliminate any renovation and maintain the landscape as is, if financially feasible.
- Many expressed that they were not under the impression that landscaping renovations would be done with the increased assessment and expected the funds to go towards maintenance.
- Irrigation replacement options were discussed briefly, particularly whether or not a full replacement was necessary or if modifications and repairs were feasible.
- There was a request for cost analysis on water savings and maintenance costs on new landscape versus existing.
- Attendees articulated concerns about the current landscape maintenance contractor, noting a change in the quality of service and need for improvement.
- Concern was expressed for the removal and replacement of trees within the district. Consensus was to keep and maintain the tree inventory, including replacement of dead trees.
- Although several attendees commented they understand a slow transition to drought tolerant plantings, there was a clear sentiment the community wants to maintain its lush landscape that attracted them to buy in their neighborhood and they want the landscape to complement their property values.
- The community is invested in their landscape and wants to be involved in the selection and prioritization of improvements.

Meeting attendees were asked to sign in and provide their contact information so they may be notified and engaged regarding the District landscape, updates, and for any potential future workshops or information. Informational packets with conceptual drawings for Skylark and the Handy Creek Paseo, a summary of plant materials for the Skylark and Handy Creek Paseo projects, and meadowgrass alternatives were distributed for attendees to take home. Attached are copies of the handouts. Attendees were encouraged to conduct research they felt helpful to evaluate the plant selections.

### **Next Steps**

- The City had requested input on Skylark Place through September 17, at which time City staff will evaluate all input received at the meeting and through email or phone call correspondence to determine a recommendation for next steps on this project. In the interim, City staff has directed the contractor to water the dirt area on Skylark Place to maintain dust control.

- Based on the overwhelming input at the meeting that the community would like to maintain turf/green grass, staff is evaluating options on how to best accomplish this, at Skylark, Trails End and throughout the District.
- City staff is reviewing the existing maintenance contract to ensure compliance with all specifications, as well as evaluating if the current specifications are sufficient to provide the service level desired.
- Work on the Handy Creek Paseo re-design is on hold.
- City staff is creating an email list of all those who provided their contact information to send future updates and solicit future input.