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REMOVAL OF COASTAL REDWOOD IN MEMORIAL PARK

(NEWBERG, OR) – In early February 2024, a group of Newberg community members speaking for the Sustainable Solutions Group of the Newberg-Dundee Area brought concerns to the City Council regarding the planned removal of a Coastal Redwood tree located in Memorial Park near S Blaine Street¹. The City Council and staff heard this group’s concerns regarding the removal of the Redwood tree that serves as a central landmark in Downtown Newberg. Council moved to analyze possible alternative options, seeking any ideas that had not yet been considered.

The City of Newberg regularly deals with the removal and replanting of city trees. This is an inevitable part of civic growth and development. Population growth and the need for housing development is one part of this civic growth and development. Another is due to the new information regarding the best types of flora to suit the unique conditions presented by urban areas and the needs of the people who live in them.

Oregon is a particularly unique state that benefits from ecotourism, and as a result, places constraints on the types of development that a city can engage in. Measures like establishing an Urban Growth Boundary (UGB)² are one of the ways the state ensures that human development doesn’t encroach on natural resources and agricultural land. Green spaces within city limits are equally vital as they provide shade, community gathering spaces, and quality of life to the people who live in them. This is especially true for those who cannot afford to travel far outside city limits to enjoy larger parks and outdoor recreation. These spaces that are densely populated with plant life also function as carbon sponges, keeping the air clean and safe to breathe.

City parks are incredibly valued resources to Newberg’s community. Newberg’s city leadership and Chehalem Parks and Recreation District³ work in concert to manage these spaces responsibly. Parks are a centerpiece of urban life and create a strong connection to the community and the natural world surrounding them. This is not a relationship that is taken lightly, but several factors play into the management of these spaces. This includes not only the visible plant life and recreation opportunities available, but also the unseen utilities that are below the feet of everyone who lives, works, or plays in the city and benefits from the carefully orchestrated engineering that keeps the city running.

¹ See more about this on the city’s website: <https://www.newbergoregon.gov/maintenance/page/blaine-street-tree-removal>

² See Oregon.gov for more information on the UGB: <https://www.oregon.gov/lcd/up/pages/ugbs-and-urbanrural-reserves.aspx>

³ CPRD has a lease agreement for the land that Memorial Park occupies. The City of Newberg owns it and has designated it as Park Land. The adjacent parcel of land that the Public Safety Building sits on is also city property but is not designated as park land. Learn more about the parks and rec district: <https://www.cprdnewberg.org/>

The city's decision regarding the removal of trees is always out of necessity to act as responsible stewards to the entire community. The city recognizes that the removal of the remarkable Coastal Redwood in Memorial Park is not favored by some community members, and that the removal of this tree will leave a hole in our community. Fencing had been placed around the tree to create a safe space for the work needed for its removal.

Out of respect for those who have advocated so fiercely for the Redwood, the city has removed some of the fencing that was placed around the tree. This arrangement was brought about by City Manager Will Worthey and Reverend Casey Banks from Newberg First United Methodist Church to allow people to take the opportunity to mark the passage of this beautiful tree. To allow people time to visit the tree it will not be removed until next month (April of 2024).

Efforts will be made to communicate about the upcoming planting of several new trees in Memorial Park that will thrive and provide shade and beauty for generations to come. The city welcomes suggestions or resources from the community regarding ways to commemorate the Redwood tree.

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