



Clark Land Design, PLLC

Landscape Architecture - Land Use Planning - Development Consulting

March 6, 2019

Gus Harb
Harb Engineering, Inc.

Memo

Gus,

Below are my comments and recommendations regarding the draft staff report findings related to the timing of street frontage plantings and driveway locations.

Timing of street frontage plantings:

In my professional opinion and experience, it is usually not a good idea to install street trees prior to final plat. Planting is best completed as the final step after ALL other construction is done and underground irrigation is installed. Street trees and other plantings require quality topsoil, irrigation, and mulch to thrive. Typically, irrigation within the planter strips along a lot frontage is provided by the water service from the new home. There is no water service or irrigation available until AFTER the home is constructed, so street trees installed prior to home construction usually have no irrigation system to water them. Irrigation systems typically also need electricity which is provided from the home. Sidewalks are typically installed AFTER home construction because heavy equipment must access the lots during home construction and that equipment will break up the sidewalks. Also, without a sidewalk, there is no planter strip for the street tree and no boundary for an irrigation system. So, street trees installed prior to final plat are often damaged or destroyed by construction equipment during home construction, sidewalk construction, and/or irrigation installation. Or they die from lack of water and stress from poor soil. Lots are typically just rough graded using existing sub-soil at the time of final plat, so street trees planted prior to final plat are typically planted in substandard subsoil instead of the quality topsoil they need.

In conclusion:

It is almost always preferable to install plantings after all site, utility and home construction is complete. Therefore, it is better to make the installation of street trees a condition of occupancy rather than a condition of final plat approval. The only exception to this rule applies to street trees installed on adjacent collector/arterial streets on double frontage lots where homes do not directly access those streets. Street trees on Lambert Lane should be installed **PRIOR TO OCCUPANCY.**

Driveway Locations:

The location of driveways is usually determined by the builder or homeowner during the building permit process. It is not reasonable to determine driveway locations prior to final plat. Subdivisions are typically platted by a developer and then lots are sold to builders or future



homeowners. The floor plan of the home is usually the decision of the homeowner or builder, not the developer. Requiring developer to decide on the location of driveways prior to final plat unreasonably limits the floor plan choices of the homeowner or builder. The driveway locations are dictated by the building footprint during the building permit process. Street trees should be tentatively placed so that there are gaps for tentative driveway locations; however, driveway locations and street tree locations should be flexible and fluid until driveway locations are determined during the building permit approval process.

Sincerely,

James Clark, LA, ASLA - Principal
Clark Land Design, PLLC