

Streetscape plan establishes landscape standards for EDH Roadway

By Mike Roberts, Village Life staff writer – August 8, 2007

Some of El Dorado Hills' roads are adorned with flower beds and well-trimmed patches of grass, others with brushy, litter-strewn fire hazards.

Community Service District Planner Kent Malonson is doing something about it. He presented a draft Streetscape plan which will be a blueprint for roadside landscaping in EDH to the Parks and Planning Committee last week, and is ready for input from the CSD Directors, civic groups and the general public.

Streetscape is the term for landscaping in and around major roadways in the community. It provides continuity and character to the mix of villages, open space, and commercial districts which is El Dorado Hills. When done well, streetscaping provides a clean, coherent "feel" to the community, and is generally believed to increase property values.

"There's a lot of areas around the district that could be cleaned up," said Malonson, citing examples on EDH Boulevard, Silva Valley and Green Valley Roads. "We've got lots of unlandscaped open space frontage, mismatched fences, and incompatible color schemes," he said.

The plan also includes suggested landscaping for freeway ramps, roadside fences and walls, including specific suggestions for materials and colors.

Malonson insists that the intent is not to make all the landscaping the same, "but when something's going to happen road-wise, I want to be Johnny-on-the-spot with the streetscape plan so we can have some say in what they do."

CSD Planning Director Dianna Hillyer said the plan will also, "keep us from getting Florida landscape here in the western Sierra Nevada foothills."

Parks Director Kent Oakley hopes the plan will force developers to install landscape that is maintainable with the existing landscape equipment

The county Department of Transportation, not the CSD, has ultimate control over the roadways in EDH. "We have to get their endorsement for anything we do," said Malonson.

Having a plan to refer to should also make it easier for DOT to justify putting roadway infrastructure in place to support landscaping; things like pipes under roadways for future water or electrical needs, and concrete curbs rather than asphalt, which deteriorates around water.

CSD Director Dave Trapani suggested that the stretch of EDH Boulevard north of Governors Drive would be a good place to start. "It's gross – I don't know how else to describe it," he said.

The looming EDH Boulevard realignment along Francisco Boulevard, current scheduled for 2011, made it difficult to justify spending money on landscaping that would likely be bulldozed in four years.

Residents have pleaded with the CSD to cleanup the area for years. Two Canterbury Circle residents took matters into their own hands last year and planted the ill-fated redwood trees which have now died without watering systems in place.

What specific streetscape projects might EDH residents see prior to 2011? It depends largely on whether funding exists in one of the many overlapping Landscape and Lighting Assessment District to

pay for the project. If not, the project must compete with all the other parks and recreation and infrastructure projects in the CSD Master Plan. Historically, park projects beat out streetscape.

The CSD's chief financial officer Gerry Tryhane suggested that the Streetscape plan would be a good tool to identify deficient L&L districts to the residents and suggest updating their annual contribution so that the neighborhood landscape can be improved.

Hillyer said that neighborhoods that want landscaping have historically formed committees to raise consciousness, sometimes money. They convince their neighbors to vote for an increase in the L&L assessment, which in turn helps fund the improvements.

Malonson is making the rounds collecting feedback from interested parties, including APAC, the Citizen's Advisory Council, the Department of Transportation and you, the residents of El Dorado Hills.

Once the plan is in final form, specific projects and funding sources will be evaluated.

The Parks and Planning Committee hopes to finalize the plan in their September meeting.

The draft Streetscape Plan will be available soon on the CSD's website, www.edhcsd.org, and can be viewed in the CSD offices at 1021 Harvard Way.

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