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BROOKS STREET TREE WORK STARTS TUESDAY

New trees will add beauty and diversity

The first step toward 34 new, healthy trees for the Brooks Street boulevard starts on Tuesday.

Missoula arborist firm Able Tree Service, contracting with the City of Missoula, will begin removal of 34 boulevard Norway maples that have reached the ends of their lives and become a danger to walkers, cyclists and neighboring houses. They will be replaced with six types of new trees that will add diversity of species and age to the urban forest along Brooks Street.

“This is a great opportunity to improve the health and diversity of our urban forest with three dozen new trees and to help keep it beautiful and viable for future generations,” said Ben Carson, Missoula’s urban forester.

The maples were planted in the early 1900s by forward-thinking City residents who wished to create a graceful southwestern entry to Missoula between Mount Avenue and Higgins Avenue. Today, the trees are nearing the end of their natural life span, and some have suffered storm damage and neglect.

The tree replacement is part of a larger boulevard preservation project that will begin soon on Brooks Street. Between Higgins and Mount, curbs and gutters, as well as the pavement, have deteriorated, allowing erosion of the boulevard. Lack of curbs has also made it possible for cars to park on the boulevard, compacting the soil and endangering the trees.

The project will bring new curbs and gutters and pavement. The boulevard work will include removal of dying and dangerous trees, soil amendment and additional topsoil and new trees.

City Forester Ben Carson chose six species for replacement trees: Redmond linden, bur oak, hackberry, thornless honeylocust, Triumph hybrid elm, and Vanguard hybrid elm. Property owners

whose boulevard trees were identified as unsalvageable are reviewing the selection of tree types and will be able to request their preferences.

“Even though these are publicly-owned trees in the boulevard, we wanted the people who live on the street and own property there to help guide the choices of trees on their blocks,” said Ginny Merriam, the City of Missoula’s communications officer.

The project is made possible by state money set aside by House Bill 645 when federal stimulus money came to the state. The state money totals \$238,700, and the City of Missoula Street Maintenance Department will perform asphalt and paving work under additional contract with the Montana Department of Transportation.

The project came up quickly, and the time frame is short; the money must be spent by Aug. 31. To complete the work on schedule, Able Tree Service crews may work the next few weekends. Weekday work will begin at 7 a.m. and weekend work no earlier than 9 a.m.

Following Able’s tree removal work, a stump-grinding contractor and then a tree-planting firm will continue the project. Street work will begin the week of May 24.

For an interview with urban forester Ben Carson on Tuesday, contact:

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