



STAFF REPORT

To: **Beautification Commission**

Date: **December 4, 2025**

From: **Richard Holtz, Parks Superintendent/City Arborist (650) 558-7333**
Veronica Flores, Parks Administrative Assistant II (650) 558-7330

Subject: **Consideration of Petition to Remove Themed Block Designation for the 1600 Block of McDonald Way**

RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommend the Commission review the staff report, receive public comment, and approve or deny the petition to remove the Themed Block Designation for the 1600 Block of McDonald Way.

BACKGROUND

A street tree themed block is defined as a block in which one dominant species of street tree is established and maintained indefinitely. Once a themed block is established and a tree is removed for any reason, the tree would be replaced with a tree of the established theme species.

Themed Blocks were originally established during the development phase of certain neighborhoods. The concept was memorialized when the idea for establishing Themed Blocks was first introduced to the City Council by two interested citizens who wanted to help maintain the historic and aesthetic look and feel of several blocks with a dominant tree species. The idea was referred to the Beautification Commission for consideration.

In April 2008, the Beautification Commission heard the proposal, which included discussion on several topics, including the following: width of available planting areas, altering current planting lists, changing how street trees are selected by district/block/neighborhood, (re)introducing the concept of a dominant species, updating the tree inventory, and potential elimination of tree categories from planting plans (ornamentals and evergreens). In May 2008, then Parks and Recreation Director Schwartz facilitated a discussion between the Commission and community members. As a result of that discussion, the Commission made the following recommendations to the City Council:



City of Burlingame

Parks & Recreation Department

850 Burlingame Ave., Burlingame, CA 94010
phone: (650) 558-7330 • parksadmin@burlingame.org



City Street Trees – Themed Blocks

(Revised 01.2024)

Street	Theme	Recommendation
1600 Adeline	Sycamore	Retain Themed Block
1700 Adeline	Sycamore	Retain Themed Block
1800 Adeline	Sycamore	Retain Themed Block
1900 Adeline	Sycamore	Retain Themed Block
2000 Adeline	Sycamore	Retain Themed Block
500 Almer	Liquidambar	Replace w/ Red Maple
800 Alpine	Sycamore	Retain Themed Block
1000 Balboa	Liquidambar	Replace w/ Trident Maple
1400 Balboa	Catalpa	Retain Themed Block
1600 Balboa	Liquidambar	Replace w/ Trident Maple
100 Bayswater	Ginkgo	Retain Themed Block
200 Bayswater	Ginkgo	Retain Themed Block
300 Bayswater	Ginkgo	Retain Themed Block
400 Bayswater	Ginkgo	Retain Themed Block
500 Bayswater	Ginkgo	Retain Themed Block
600 Bayswater	Ginkgo	Retain Themed Block
700 Bayswater	Ginkgo	Retain Themed Block
800 Bayswater	Ginkgo	Retain Themed Block
900 Bayswater	Ginkgo	Retain Themed Block
1000 Bayswater	Ginkgo	Retain Themed Block
1100 Bayswater	Ginkgo	Retain Themed Block
1200 Bayswater	Ginkgo	Retain Themed Block
1300 Bayswater	Ginkgo	Retain Themed Block
1200 Bellevue	Liquidambar	Replace w/ Red Maple
1300 Bernal	Sycamore	Retain Themed Block
1400 Bernal	Sycamore	Retain Themed Block
300 Bloomfield	Sycamore	Retain Themed Block
400 Bloomfield	Sycamore	Retain Themed Block
300 Burlingame Ave	Camphor	Replace w/ Red Maple
400 Burlingame Ave	Camphor	Replace w/ Red Maple
500 Burlingame Ave	Camphor	Replace w/ Red Maple
800 Burlingame Ave	Camphor	Replace w/ Red Maple
850 - 1000 Burlingame Ave	Lemon-Scented Gum	Retain Themed Block
1500 Burlingame Ave.	Sycamore	Retain Themed Block
1200 Cabrillo	Liquidambar	Replace w/ Trident Maple
400 - 1100 California Dr.	P. Calleryana 'Chanticleer' = (9 blocks)	Replace with 'European Hornbeam'
1100 Cambridge	Elm	Retain Themed Block
300 Channing	Sycamore	Retain Themed Block
200 Chapin Ln.	Sycamore	Retain Themed Block
300 Chapin Ln.	Sycamore	Retain Themed Block
1600 Chapin Ave.	Sycamore	Retain Themed Block
400 Chatham	Sycamore	Retain Themed Block
300 Clarendon	Red Oak	Retain Themed Block

1500	Columbus	Red Oak	Retain Themed Block
300	Concord	Liquidambar	Replace w/ Red Maple
600	Concord	Sycamore	Retain Themed Block
700	Concord	Sycamore	Retain Themed Block
500	Corbitt	Sycamore	Retain Themed Block
1100	Cortez	Sycamore	Retain Themed Block
1200	Cortez	Sycamore	Retain Themed Block
800	Crossway	Liquidambar	Replace w/ Red Maple
400	Cumberland	Sycamore	Retain Themed Block
1400	Desoto	Sycamore	Retain Themed Block
1100	Douglas	Sycamore	Retain Themed Block
1100	Drake	Sycamore	Retain Themed Block
300	Dwight	Red Oak	Retain Themed Block
1500-2000	Easton	Euc. Globulus = (6 blks.)	Replace w/ Lemon-Scented Gum
800	Edgehill	Liquidambar	Replace w/ Red Maple
1300	Edgehill	Liquidambar	Replace w/ Red Maple
1400	Floribunda	Liquidambar	Replace w/ Red Maple
1500	Floribunda	Liquidambar	Replace w/ Red Maple
500	Francisco	Sycamore	Retain Themed Block
2100	Hillside	Sycamore	Retain Themed Block
2200	Hillside	Sycamore	Retain Themed Block
2300	Hillside	Sycamore	Retain Themed Block
2400	Hillside	Sycamore	Retain Themed Block
1200	Laguna	Sycamore	Retain Themed Block
1300	Laguna	Liquidambar	Replace w/ Red Maple
1400	Laguna	Liquidambar	Replace w/ Red Maple
300	Lexington	Sycamore	Retain Themed Block
500	Lexington	Sycamore	Retain Themed Block
600	Lexington	Sycamore	Retain Themed Block
800	Maple	Linden	Replace w/ Trident Maple
400	Marin	Sycamore	Retain Themed Block
500	Marin	Sycamore	Retain Themed Block
1600	McDonald Way	Liriodendron	Replace w/ Red Maple
1100	Mills	Sycamore	Themed Block
1200	Mills	Sycamore	Retain Themed Block
1300	Mills	Sycamore	Retain Themed Block
1400	Mills	Sycamore	Retain Themed Block
1500	Newlands	Sycamore	Retain Themed Block
1400	Oak Grove	Red Oak	Retain Themed Block
100	Occidental	Sycamore	Retain Themed Block
200	Occidental	Sycamore	Retain Themed Block
300	Occidental	Sycamore	Retain Themed Block
400	Occidental	Sycamore	Retain Themed Block
1100	Oxford	Elm	Retain Themed Block
1100	Palm	Sycamore	Retain Themed Block
1200	Palm	Sycamore	Retain Themed Block
1300	Palm	Sycamore	Retain Themed Block
1400	Palm	Sycamore	Retain Themed Block
700	Plymouth	Sycamore	Retain Themed Block
1100	Sanchez	Sycamore	Retain Themed Block
1200	Sanchez	Sycamore	Retain Themed Block
1300	Sanchez	Sycamore	Retain Themed Block
1400	Sanchez	Sycamore	Retain Themed Block
1600	Sherman	Sycamore	Retain Themed Block

1700	Sherman	Sycamore	Retain Themed Block
10	Stanley	Liriodendron	Replace w/ Trident Maple
100	Stanley	Liriodendron	Replace w/ Trident Maple
200	Stanley	Liriodendron	Replace w/ Trident Maple
2100	Trousdale	Modesto Ash	Replace w/ Raywood Ash
1100	Vancouver	Catalpa	Retain Themed Block
500	Vernon	Sycamore	Retain Themed Block
600	Vernon	Liquidambar	Replace w/ Red Maple
700	Vernon	Sycamore	Retain Themed Block
700	Winchester Dr.	Sycamore	Retain Themed Block
800	Winchester Dr.	Sycamore	Retain Themed Block

City of Burlingame
Petition to Apply for Establishment, Modify or Remove a Street Tree Themed Block
(Only this form can be used to gather signatures)

Definition of a Street Tree Themed Block: A street tree themed block is defined as a block in which one defined species of street tree is established and maintained indefinitely. Once a themed block is established and a tree is removed for any reason, the tree would be replaced with a tree of the established theme species. The Beautification Commission and City Council use the following criteria when considering establishment of a themed block: the percent of predominant tree species, health and disease tolerance of the species, amount of tree diversity, mix of species, age, aesthetic look on the block, current tree canopy, future canopy potential, width of the street, and the width of planter strips.

Policy to Establish, Modify or Remove a Themed Block

- The Beautification Commission will recommend “Themed Blocks” to the City Council.
- To petition the Beautification Commission for a new themed block a property owner on a block shall gather signatures of at least 2/3 of the property owners on the block.
- To petition the Beautification Commission to modify a specific themed block tree species *or* Remove a specific block from the Themed Block List, a property owner on a block shall gather signatures of at least 75% of the property owners on the block.
- Forms for the “Petition” will be provided by the Parks and Recreation Department office.
- Petitions shall be forwarded to the Beautification Commission for recommendation to the Council to establish, modify or remove a themed block.
- A public hearing will be set by the Beautification Commission and notification will be sent by staff to all property owners on the block.
- If approved by the Beautification Commission and/or the City Council, staff will determine the species theme in collaboration with the property owners.
- Selected “themed” species will replace existing trees only when removal of an existing tree is deemed necessary according to City policy.

Street and Block Requested for Consideration:

Street Tree Species Desired: _____

Street Tree Themed Block Signature Form

Property Owner Statement: I am the property owner at the address listed below and I support the Beautification Commission and City Council in _____ establishing this block as a Street Tree Themed Block, _____ modifying this themed block Street Tree or _____ removing this themed block Street Tree within the City of Burlingame. Revised 1/2016

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Street and Block Requested for Consideration: McDonald Way (1600 Block)

Mark One: Establish _____ Modify _____ Remove a Themed Block ✓

Street Tree Species Desired: N/A

Street Tree Themed Block Signature Form

Property Owner Statement: I am the property owner at the address listed below and I support the Beautification Commission and City Council in establishing this block as a Street Tree Themed Block, modifying this themed block Street Tree or ✓ removing this themed block Street Tree within the City of Burlingame. Revised 1/2016

Date	Property Address	Property Owner Name(s) (Printed)	Property Owner Signature
11/6/25	1910 Ray Drive	Kathleen Parker	<i>kp</i>
11/18/25	2000 Ray Drive	AMIT BANDLISH	<i>ab</i>
11/10/25	1604 McDonald Wy	Pete Wenger	<i>pw</i>
11/10/25	1605 McDonald Wy	Tulsi Gopal	<i>tg</i>
	1608 McDonald Wy	→ See next page	→
11/10/25	1609 McDonald Wy	MOHIT MENGHANI	<i>mm</i>
	1612 McDonald Wy		
11/11/25	1613 McDonald Wy	PATRICK DOWERY	<i>pd</i>



Official Street Tree List

City of Burlingame | Parks Division

850 Burlingame Ave., Burlingame, CA 94010
 phone: (650) 558-7330 • fax: (650) 696-7216
parksadmin@burlingame.org



TREES TO BE PLANTED IN AREAS 6' WIDE AND OVER

Botanical Name	Common Name	Height at Maturity	Description
<i>Acer rubrum</i>	Red Maple	40'-50'	DECIDUOUS: Fast growth; lobed, green leaves; brilliant fall color.
<i>Angophora costata</i>	Sydney Red Gum	100'-150'	EVERGREEN: Striking red bark, wide canopy, low water use.
<i>Arbutus menziesii</i>	Madrone	80'-125'	EVERGREEN: Moderate growth; striking bark, fragrant flowers, rounded canopy.
<i>Cinnamomum camphora</i>	Camphor	40'-50'	EVERGREEN: Slow to moderate growth; yellow green aromatic leaves; tiny yellow flowers in spring.
<i>Platanus acerifolia</i>	London Plane Sycamore/Columbia	40'-60'	DECIDUOUS: Fast growth; large, lobe, maple like leaves; sheds old bark; new bark smooth, cream color.
<i>Quercus agrifolia</i>	Coast Live Oak	40'-70'	EVERGREEN: Moderate to fast growth; dense foliage; round holly-like leaves; round-headed, spreading crown.
<i>Quercus coccinea</i>	Scarlet Oak	40'-70'	DECIDUOUS: Moderate to fast growth; high, open branches; large, bright green leaves turn, red in fall.
<i>Quercus douglasii</i>	Blue Oak	20'-66'	DECIDUOUS: Slow growth, bluish green leaves, wide/rounded canopy, low water use.
<i>Quercus hypoleucoides</i>	Silverleaf Oak	60'-70'	EVERGREEN: Moderate growth, gray leaves, large rounded canopy.
<i>Quercus lobata</i>	Valley Oak	25'-80'	DECIDUOUS: Moderate growth, lobed leaves, rounded canopy. One of the world's largest oak species native to California.
<i>Quercus rubra</i>	Red Oak	40'-70'	DECIDUOUS: Fast growth; spreading branches with round crown.
<i>Quillaja saponaria</i>	Soapbark tree	50'-65'	EVERGREEN: Slow growing; yellow or cream flower, rounded canopy.
<i>Schinus molle</i>	California Pepper	25'-40'	EVERGREEN: A willow-like canopy, green leaves, attractive and fragrant pink berries in the summer.
<i>Ulmus</i>	Patriot Elm	60'-80'	DECIDUOUS: Fast growth; graceful vase shape limbs; glossy dark green foliage, yellow in fall. Subject to Availability.

- Retain existing 'themed' streets in the City of Burlingame by replacing them with existing species if the dominant species on the street is of tall form. This is regardless of disruptions to sidewalks.
- Do not create 'themed' streets where they currently do not exist and allow the property owners to choose from the appropriate tree list.
- Staff should revise the official street tree lists to contain trees that only have the tallest, most significant canopies.
- In addition, retain 'ornamentals' and 'evergreen' tree species with the tallest, most significant canopies on the official tree lists.
- Include some larger species from the 6' planter strip list to the 4-6' planter strip list where possible, or change the dimensions of planting strip requirements.
- Create larger planting spaces throughout the City where possible.
- Only remove and replace trees when an existing tree must be removed.
- Tree replacements should be planted as soon as possible.

As a result of the Beautification Commission action and Council consensus, staff prepared a Draft Themed Block List and Policy of Establishing a Themed Block, which was presented at the August 7, 2008, Beautification Commission meeting. The Themed Block List and Policy were approved at the September 4, 2008 Beautification Commission meeting. The policy included:

- The Beautification Commission will recommend "Themed Blocks" to the City Council.
- To petition the Beautification Commission for a new themed block, a property owner on a block shall gather signatures of at least 2/3 of the property owners.
- Forms for the "Petition" will be provided by the Parks and Recreation Department Office.
- Petitions shall be forwarded to the Beautification Commission for recommendation to the Council to establish a new "themed" block.
- If approved, staff will determine the species theme in collaboration with the property owners.
- Selected "themed" species will replace existing trees only when removing an existing tree is deemed necessary according to City policy.

Ninety-eight blocks were designated as Themed Blocks. Since then, the City and residents have added 24 Themed Blocks, bringing the total to 122 (Exhibit A).

The ability to remove a block from the Themed Block designation was added later. Presently, if a block would like to remove the Themed Block designation, 75% of property owners must agree to remove the entire block for the matter to be considered (Exhibit B).

Themed Blocks provide a benefit to the community by honoring the intended look of a developed area. Themed Blocks can create an aesthetic look and feel with a memorable uniformity. Themed Blocks can also face challenges, such as fast-spreading disease or insect infestations. Having a single species increases the likelihood that a single disease or insect will cause widespread tree loss, potentially devastating an entire block.

Additionally, requiring a large canopy tree due to a themed block designation in a location with confined growing space can create a continual conflict. This includes the tree being unable to grow to the typical species size due to overhead utilities. These trees cannot reach their intended size and require significant and frequent maintenance resources from the City and utility providers to reduce risk.

DISCUSSION

In October 2025, a resident of McDonald Way was informed that they could not select a tree from the City's official species list, as was previously erroneously promised to them by staff. It was discovered that McDonald Way was designated a Themed Block, and the only planting option is the Red Maple tree. The resident was surprised to find that the 1600 block of McDonald Way had multiple species planted over the last decade and lacked a common theme. The resident submitted the attached petition on behalf of their neighbors. Staff have matched the signatures of property owners and found that 86% property owners support the removal of the Themed Block designation. (EXHIBIT C).

Staff have researched the area's history. It appears that when the area was developed, the Liriodendron (Tulip Tree) was planted at most residences along this street. The Parks division no longer plants this tree due to susceptibility to aphids and significant root-infrastructure challenges. Between 2008 and 2016, the Red Maple tree became the chosen replacement species. However, the table below shows the actual species at 1600 McDonald Way.

Total Available Planting Sites	28
Vacancies	3
Original Theme Tree (Tulip Tree)	6
Replacement Theme Tree (Red Maple)	12
Other Species	7
Other Species Planted Since 2012	3 (2013, 2020, 2021)

Should the Beautification Commission approve the removal of the Themed Block designation for the 1600 block of McDonald Way, the property-owners would select the replacement street trees from the trees approved on the list for planting areas greater than 6'. (EXHIBIT D)

In preparation for the Thursday, December 4, 2025, Beautification Commission Meeting, staff have noticed this subject via the City E-news, social media, and mailing to 26 property owners and tenants that live along the 1600 block of McDonald Way.

FISCAL IMPACT

No fiscal impact is likely.

EXHIBITS

- A. Current Themed Block List
- B. Themed Block Policy Form
- C. Petition from Property-Owners along the 1600 Block of McDonald Way
- D. Street Tree Species List for Planters Greater Than 6'