

Village Del Prado Landscaping Update

You will receive a Landscape Survey in the mail this week. It is **ESSENTIAL** that you voice your opinion and return this survey to us by September 21, 2018.

Our landscaping was put in after our buildings were constructed in the mid 1980's. Village Del Prado (VDP) has made no substantial investment in landscaping since that time. All of the professional landscapers and arborists who have walked our property in recent years have informed us that many of our plants are old and in bad shape, nearing the end of their lives.

Re-landscaping will involve removal of plants, shrubs, and trees that are deteriorating. This is a costly, equipment-heavy and labor-heavy operation; particularly with respect to larger trees and shrubs having extensive root systems. This is not something we can easily do in-house.

The VDP Board has been working on a re-landscaping plan for the past 3 years as discussed at many of our Board meetings. We have delayed buying and spreading new mulch this year in anticipation of re-landscaping. We did not want to waste your money on mulch that would be destroyed by roofing and landscape workers.

Our goal has always been to update the landscaping with affordable, yet attractive plantings that thrive in our particular climate and do not require extraordinary maintenance. We also want to have a "consistent look" throughout Village Del Prado, to increase curb appeal and increase the property value.

Landscape Proposals

We have consulted with landscaping companies and recently received proposals from two of them. One of those proposals was from Trimac, the company that recently re-landscaped the Vistas. We asked Vista residents and they overall have been happy with the job Trimac did for them. Trimac also has the contract for our mowing and shrub trimming. OGPOA recently awarded Trimac another contract to re-landscape the common ground islands.

We were able to negotiate a significantly lower price on a contract with Trimac if we are ready to begin this fall. The project would extend from late fall of 2018 into spring 2019, with Trimac completing about 2 to 3 of our 10 buildings each month as long as the weather is conducive to planting. They would be landscaping our front, back and side yards. You can view Trimac's website at <https://www.trimacoutdoor.com/>

The Board's main goal is to maintain our property in the best, most cost-effective manner possible. If the survey shows that VDP owners do not want to re-landscape the property despite the age and condition of our landscape plants, the Board will cease its efforts. The membership should keep in mind that delaying this project may disadvantage us significantly. It is unlikely that we can get this level of pricing again. It was very difficult to find landscapers who wanted this work and would provide a bid.

We walked with four landscapers and received bids from only two of those. There is a labor shortage in the St Augustine area and the rate of inflation has been steadily increasing.

The Petition

When the September 4th vote on a special assessment for the landscaping was scheduled, several people voiced opposition. Subsequently, we received a petition asking the Board to postpone its decision by 30 days. The Board granted the request for an additional 30 days. The petition also raised five matters that are discussed below.

1. Risk of new landscaping prior to hurricane season and winter.

The Board granted the 30-day extension requested by the petitioners. If the survey indicates the Board should go forth with the landscaping, it will take some time after the October 4th Board meeting to begin the landscaping project. Therefore, the hurricane season concern will essentially self-correct. We will have the maximum length of time possible between planting and the next hurricane season. Concerns were also expressed about planting before the winter freeze. We discussed this with Trimac and they said they will plant only the cold-hardy plants prior to winter, and the temperature-sensitive ones after the threat of freeze has passed.

2. Option of doing entire landscaping in 1 versus 2 or 3 years.

There has been a suggestion to stretch the landscaping project over 2 or 3 years. While this is something we can do, it has a number of significant disadvantages. First, this will most likely result in much higher costs. It is unlikely we can even get a landscaping company to agree to a contract that extends over this period of time; therefore, it would require renegotiation every time we are ready to proceed with more landscaping. The process of obtaining bids, negotiating a contract, mailing out notices of a special assessment, holding a board meeting to vote on the contract and another special assessment, and responding to any membership concerns, involves significant labor on the part of our office staff, Board, and Landscape Committee. It also leaves open the possibility that these steps cannot be completed and the landscaping will remain only partially completed.

There is also the matter of deciding which buildings are landscaped first versus one or two years from now. The Board does not want to be put in the position of making that decision. In addition, if we have different landscapers doing the work, with plants from different batches, it will be more difficult to create a consistent look throughout the community.

One option is to have the landscaper do the front and sides of the buildings, then the back at a later date. This option would hopefully not increase our costs too much.

3. Determine HOA monthly maintenance fee for 2019.

The VDP budget workshop will be held in on Friday, September 14, 2018. All unit owners are welcome to attend. We should have a good idea of the approximate monthly fees after that discussion. A final decision will be made at the annual meeting on October 16th, but there should be no significant change in the information from the budget meeting, barring unanticipated disasters, etc. After the Budget Workshop a summary of the meeting will be emailed to owners and posted to the VDP website.

We realize that after Hurricane Irma, most unit owners had to pay \$400 "out-of-pocket" for roof replacements (\$2,400 minus a \$2,000 loss assessment reimbursement from personal insurance policies). Unfortunately, a few owners did not have the loss assessment clause in their policies and had to pay the entire \$2400 out of pocket. It looks as if a special assessment for the landscaping would be about \$1400. The Board has heard feedback that some owners would rather not pay this amount upfront. For those owners, the Board should be able to provide an alternative payment plan (for example, \$200 a month for 7 months or something similar).

4. Potential outcomes of pending and future roofing repairs/replacement

We have completed all the scheduled roof replacements. The remaining roofs are on their normal replacement schedule; i.e., Buildings 1 and 2 around 2021, Building 10 around 2022, and Buildings 3 and 6 around 2026, unless something happens and we need to replace any of them ahead of schedule. Our reserves have been calculated to pay for the scheduled roof replacements without a special assessment. As far as the insurance money for Hurricane Irma damage, we have no way of knowing if we will get any money, how much, or when. We could get a satisfactory settlement this year but anticipate extended litigation for several more years with no out of pocket expense to VDP. There is so much uncertainty with regard to this potential insurance money that the Board, while aggressively pursuing it, cannot reasonably consider it for planning purposes.

5. Responsibilities and performance of Trimac in the Vistas landscaping project

Some concern was expressed about weeds around the new plantings in the Vistas, and whether Trimac was fulfilling its maintenance responsibilities. Trimac responded that they walk with Vista Board representatives monthly to find out about any concerns they may have and assess the condition of the landscaping. The Trimac representative said no major concerns have been raised about the weeding or any other aspect of the maintenance program. VDP intends to walk any new landscaping with the contractor on a regular basis to address any concerns.

SURVEY

In accordance with the wishes of the petitioners, we are conducting a survey of all unit owners. You should receive your survey in the mail this week. It is **ESSENTIAL** that you voice your opinion and return this survey to us by September 21, 2018, in the pre-addressed, stamped envelope. If we do not hear

from enough homeowners, the Board will have to make this decision for the community without this valuable input.