

Subject: Highlands Entrance Update

From: Kamaljeet S Saini <Kamaljeet.S.Saini@gmail.com>

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To: hdhoamembers <hdhoamembers@hdhoa.avenue.org>

Dear HDHOA Homeowners:

Greetings.

I am sure that many of you must be curious about the plans for renewing the landscaping at Highlands entrance after the derecho of July 2012, which almost completely wiped out the pleasing looks at our Highlands entrance. I have personally received queries from several homeowners in this regard. This note is an attempt to provide a current status report for the general information of everyone.

Frequent discussions have been ongoing amongst the entrance committee members as well as the boards of the various HOAs in the sub-division to come up with a mutually agreeable and executable plan. All of the necessary work entails significant expense and some HOAs are unable to financially support it all at once. While the exact details of the work schedule and costs are still being worked upon, in general the entrance renewal project will most likely be carried out in a staged manner as described below:

1. The remaining three Bradford pear trees will be removed (they are likely to fall in case of another storm), and all of the tree stumps will be ground out. This will prepare the space for reseeded and future plantings.
2. The irrigation system will be restored to make it ready for future plantings.
3. New plantings will be installed, perhaps in phases over three or four years (the "all at once" approach has been discussed, but appears to be not financially viable for some HOAs). A couple of plantation layouts have been proposed and more are expected to be submitted. All of these are being reviewed and discussed by the entrance committee with input from landscaping experts and other interested individuals in order to make a selection that is best suited for the locale and is within the financial means of the sub-division. Anyone interested is encouraged to propose a plan, provided they completely research the suitability of the plantings for our location including their disease and drought resistance characteristics. They are also required to provide cost estimates as well as identify a source for the proposed plants. One example proposal/plan can be found on our HOA website at <http://hdhoa.avenue.org/entrancecmte/fag/UpcomingEntranceProjects.pdf>
4. Budgets permitting, the work on removing the old fence and replacing it with a new one will also be undertaken in parallel, again in a phased manner.
5. The old entrance sign, as well as the new fence - once it is installed - will require periodic painting/staining (as appropriate) on an ongoing basis going forward, in

order to preserve the investment. The newly planted trees will also need to be periodically trimmed to establish and maintain a pleasant looking landscaping at the entrance.

Thanks to the concerted efforts of our association secretary, Mr. Peter Munger, who is involved with the financial planning and to those of our association president, Mr Jim Hooker, who recently hosted a meeting of all HOA presidents and treasurers at his residence, we are beginning to make some progress with respect to this project. Expect the work to start on item-1 in the list above in about a months' time. In parallel, there are ongoing efforts to review the legal liabilities of the various HOAs towards the maintenance of the common landscaping elements. Further progress will be possible after those efforts bear results and a general consensus amongst all HOAs is established.

In the meanwhile, our board and office bearers met recently to review the overall cost of this renewal project and to discuss our HOA's share of the expenses as well as the resulting financial implications for all of us. There was a unanimous consensus that given our fiscal frugality in the past, we have a healthy reserve of funds that should be tapped to pay for this "one-time expense" without having to levy any special assessment on the home-owners in our association. (Other HOAs might have to take a different route depending on their respective financial positions.) It was however noted that our dues of \$4 per household per month are extremely low (something that we are all proud of) and have not changed in about two decades. General inflation during this period has resulted in a situation where our current annual collection is not keeping pace with our routine annual operating expenses (please review the FAQ on the [treasurer's page](#) on the HOA web-site for information regarding general expenses). To remedy this situation, it was proposed to increase the monthly dues to \$5 per household per month. This proposal will of course need to be discussed further with input from all home owners before it is implemented. A general meeting of all homeowners is being planned for such a discussion. It will also to provide a forum for questions to be asked and answered - please wait for the notification with details about venue and time for this meeting.

I hope that I have answered at least a few of the questions on your mind regarding the Highlands entrance landscaping.

Regards,
Kamaljeet S. Saini
Treasurer / Highlands Detached Home Owners' Association