



Cathedral Pines Community Survey Background Information

PLEASE READ

The Cathedral Pines Metro District Board of Directors is charged by State Statute to manage the landscaping in the common areas of our community. The Board is considering several significant initiatives that will invest in our community's environment and landscaping for the years to come. The issues we are exploring are complicated and have some advantages, but like most everything, some disadvantages as well. The Board would like to gauge our residents' interest in investing in these projects over the next 5-10-20 years as appropriate. This document is intended to provide some background on the three projects being considered and help inform you when making decisions on community investment and priorities.

Please read on and consider the factors involved in pursuing each initiative. We will be distributing a survey to all residents shortly after our Metro Board Annual Meeting in late March to better understand your thoughts.

Issue #1: Dredging of Vessey Ponds

Background

The two ponds located on lower Vessey Road were created to control water and direct it away from Cathedral Pines residences. County and State regulations required that these stormwater detention basins be established to handle runoff in the event of a "100-year storm," with excess water held in the upper, or east, pond and runoff directed to the lower, or west, pond and off to the Black Squirrel Creek to the west. The western pond was constructed in the summer of 2011 to serve as a stormwater control facility for the district, and to support the capture of stormwater by the eastern pond, which was already in existence prior to 1985. More recently, the facilities have become choked with vegetation and no longer release stormwater at the original designed rates, necessitating maintenance of the facilities.

Approx. 75% of the upper pond is now overgrown with cattails, and the flow of water is blocked at both the entrance and exit of this pond by small willow trees. The west pond has been completely overtaken by cattails. In addition, the loss of standing water in both ponds has affected the wildlife in the area, with the loss of deer, birds, ducks, and other waterfowl as well as birds migrating to other, more open areas.

Proposal

The Board is considering hiring a licensed third party to dredge the two basins, removing both live and dead cattails to restore approximately 75% of the area to open water. The willow trees blocking drainage would also be removed. Dredging cranes would be hired to harvest the vegetation, and a trucking company would transport the waste to an approved disposal site. Work would be performed after August 2022 (when growth has stopped for the season) per local requirements.

Note that all County, State and Federal requirements under the Clean Water Act and Environmental regulations have been met, and written authorization by all related parties has been received by the Metro District approving this work if undertaken.

Pros

Removal of the cattails and other overgrowth would:

1. Improve area aesthetics
2. Maintain property values of homes in the area
3. Be a one-time event; that is, with minor annual maintenance (\$5,000/yr.) no additional dredging should be required
4. Increase diversity of wildlife in the area
5. Reduce or eliminate the odor from decaying growth
6. Improve water flow between the two ponds and direct it toward Black Squirrel Creek, helping to mitigate downstream flooding in the event of a major rainstorm
7. Expense can be absorbed by current Metro District budget

Cons

Reasons not to remove the current cattail growth include:

1. Health of current ponds is adequate, and dredging is not currently required by the County or State
2. Cost of approx. \$40,000 to the community via the normal operating Metro District budget
3. Inconvenience to local neighbors while work is being done (i.e., noise, odor, trucking equipment)

4. Willows can be removed without dredging of balance of ponds

Issue #2: Develop a Long-Term Landscaping Plan for Community

Background

The Cathedral Pines Metro District Board assumed responsibility for managing all community landscaping upon the departure of the Developers in 2018. The Metro District's Service Plan requires the district to install and maintain landscaping in the common areas of Cathedral pines (Paragraph D of said Plan). Unfortunately, when the developers controlled the Metro Board they did not have a "long view" for continued landscape maintenance. As a result, the Metro Board has no blueprint for continued improvements in the aesthetics of the community. The various plantings in medians and open areas are now 20 years old, and few new landscape improvements have been initiated.

Landscaping expense currently constitutes approximately 13% of the annual Metro budget, or about \$55,000/yr. Most of this expense is directed at maintenance activities; that is, mowing of open areas, removal of dead trees, and planting of annual flowers at the Milam entrance and Lodge.

Project Summary

The Cathedral Pines Metro District Board is proposing to hire a national Landscape Design firm, Kimley-Horn, to develop a 5, 10, and 20-year plan for improving the landscaping aesthetics of our community. This would include surveying our residents to determine what they would like our community to look like (i.e., maintaining the current environment, or diversifying our plantings, or adding more native growth, or move to xeriscape, etc.). Once the results of the survey are tabulated, Kimley-Horn would develop a plan to be implemented by the Metro Board over time to achieve the desired results. This plan would then be presented to the community with the related costs.

Pros

1. No long-term plan currently exists so landscaping decisions are made on an as-needed basis, meaning no additional investment in plants or trees
2. Neighborhood is 20 years old and medians and open areas need to be "refreshed"
3. Dead/overgrown shrubs and bushes have not been replaced due to irrigation issues, cost concerns, and the lack of an overall plan
4. Perception of Cathedral Pines as an "upscale" neighborhood will be restored or improved upon
5. Property values may be improved
6. Diversity of trees needs to be improved to prevent impact of mistletoe and pine beetles or other invasive insects

Cons

1. Potential significant cost to community depending upon scope of project selected
2. Current landscaping environment may be considered by some residents as adequate
3. Small amount of additional landscaping can be done within existing budget

Issue #3: Replace Existing Irrigation System

Background

The irrigation system that runs down our Milam median and into some of the other neighborhood medians was installed when the community was originally built in the early 2000s. The irrigation lines currently run down Milam Road north to the roundabout, and up Milhaven to the center median west of Vessey Road. Irrigation lines were also laid all the way to the Vessey/Holmes intersection, but it has never been fully activated other than at the entrance monument at that intersection.

In the last two years the system has had numerous breakdowns. The system was originally installed using oversized cast iron pipes that are inefficient and rusting out. Additionally, they were buried approximately 9 ft. underground, making access for repairs very difficult. The 6" diameter underground pipes are oversized for our needs, and as such require an enormous amount of water to be pumped to "prime" the pipeline. The system is controlled by over 40 manual stations located along the lines, meaning each station has to be individually programmed for operation times. Because of the numerous breaks in the line, most of the neighborhood cul-de-sacs are no longer watered. The lack of regular rainfall over the last few years has exacerbated the problem, with some shrubs dying for lack of moisture. Due to the high cost of frequent repairs and lack of accessibility, it is anticipated the irrigation system may need to be completely abandoned in the next few years.

Project Summary

The Metro District is trying to better understand the community support for replacing, abandoning, or continuing to repair the existing irrigation system. The direction taken on our irrigation system will be partially determined by the direction the community chooses in our long-term landscaping plan.

Efforts would be made to offset the cost of designing and installing a new irrigation system, should this option be chosen, by solicitation of State grants supporting more efficient water usage, refinancing of our bond payment, implementation over years, utilization of the impending FEMA Funds Reimbursement, or a one-time assessment (which would require community affirmation prior to any implementation).

Pros

Investing in a new irrigation system will benefit Cathedral Pines by:

1. Current irrigation system cannot be economically repaired
2. New system would be much more water-efficient, thereby substantially reducing water usage and mitigating the impact of pumping water from underground community wells
3. Continuing to water medians and cul-de-sacs would offer opportunity for greater diversity of trees and shrubs
4. Watering system can be built to be activated in stages allowing for expansion on an as-needed basis over time and financially prudent
5. Landscaping environment would be improved, perhaps improving home values
6. New electronic controls allow for much improved water efficiency and programming
7. New areas currently not receiving irrigation can be added

Cons

Investing in a new irrigation system would have the following repercussions:

1. Significant one-time cost would have to be absorbed by homeowners over time or through State or Federal Grants, which have not yet been investigated
2. Native shrubs requiring less water or a move toward xeriscaping could mitigate need for new irrigation system
3. Construction disruption during new system installation

Please note that it is not currently possible to estimate the cost of this project. The Metro Board would need to engage an engineering firm to design the system and a contractor to install the new lines based upon this design. These steps would only be taken if directed so by the resident survey results.

Thank you for taking the time to consider each of these important issues. Each of these projects will be further explained at our annual meeting, and your feedback will be solicited via an e-mail survey to be distributed to all residents shortly thereafter.

Your Cathedral Pines Metro District Board

Feedback: If you have further questions regarding these proposals, please attend the CP Metro District Annual Meeting on 3/31. If you are unable to attend, questions can be sent to:
Metro_Board@CathedralPinesHOA.org