

Central Carrollton Association

1522 Lowerline St.
New Orleans LA 70118
Sept. 20, 2023

Mike Karam, Director
Dept. of Parks and Parkways
1 Green Parade Ln,
New Orleans, LA 70122

Re: Decline and Death of planted trees along South Claiborne Ave..

Dear Mr. Karam,

A decade ago mature trees were removed by the USACE (Corps) from the South Claiborne Avenue median to allow federal construction of the Southeast Louisiana (SELA) drainage project from Pine St. to Leonidas St. Construction was completed by the Corps in 2016. To mitigate the loss, a plan was developed to plant new trees to restore the canopy (USACE, 2019). The Dept. of Parks and Parkways was part of that planning process.

Members of the Central Carrollton Association (CCA) and other interested community groups attended all the public meetings held by the Corps in 2019 and provided citizen input on the project. In March of 2020, Tarpon Construction received a contract to plant trees from Pine St. to Leonidas St. The contract was to plant 98 trees at a cost of \$1.4 million (USACE, 2020). We obtained all the engineering drawings from the Corps so that the CCA could monitor the planting progress (USACE, 2019).

CCA had looked forward to the re-greening of Claiborne Ave. along our boundary (Pine St. to Carrollton Ave.). Unfortunately, this has not happened and this section of S. Claiborne Avenue remains devoid of trees nearly 11 years later.

Dying Trees:

In July 2023, CCA members reported that many trees planted by the Corps' contractor were dead or severely stressed. Members of the CCA tree committee examined the condition of the 98 trees, along South Claiborne Ave. (CCA report, 2023). Tarpon Construction had been responsible for maintaining the trees for one year after planting, but after that the Dept. of Parks and Parkways is responsible for tree maintenance and protection (USACE, 2023; July e-mail to CCA). It appears to us that your agency has neglected its responsibilities.

Impact of the drought:

Our membership have expressed concern about the demise of so many trees. We are concerned about their condition and the lack of care by the City. In our July survey, as many as 39 trees were dead or in a stressed state. This was because of high temperatures, lack of rain and apparent lack of supplemental water (water bags and water trucks) during the months of June and July (CCA July, 2023).

We did notice, that by mid-August the DP&P had cut down 53 dead or stressed trees. Unfortunately, on a recent inspection our committee found additional dead or dying trees.

Inaction by Dept. Park and Parkways:

We request a report on the condition of the remaining trees, the number and species removed, and any plans to preserve remaining trees. Also, will there be a replacement of the dead trees along this stretch of South Claiborne Avenue?

Because we can expect additional dry periods, we request that **water bags** be placed around the remaining live trees as well as replenishing the mulch protection. A watering truck is essential here and would also help tree survival into the winter season-

It is concerning that Dept. of Parks and Parkways' negligence appears to be responsible for the demise of these trees and the value lost could be as high as \$700,000 or about 50% of the cost of the original federal plantings.

Thank you,

by electronic mail

Barry Kohl, Ph.D.
Board member, and
Tree Committee Chair,
Central Carrollton Association
Bkohl40@cs.com

Attachments:

cc:
Joe Giarrusso, Councilman Dist. A
Tina Hartman, Dept. Parks and Parkways
Richard Arnold, Pres. CCA
CCA Board members
H. V. Nagendra, CAN
USACE, NOD

References:

USACE, 2019. SELA Project 28.4B Claiborne Ave.; Phase 2. Leonidas St. to Pine St. Engineering Drawings, Greenspace Restoration, July 2019. (CCA acquired documents by FOIA request from USACE, in 2020).

USACE, 2020. Press release stating award of a \$1.4 million tree planting contract to Tarpon Construction, to plant 98 trees along S. Claiborne Ave. from Pine to Leonidas St., (dated March 2020).

CCA Letter to USACE, 2020. Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request for engineering drawings and documents showing tree species and planting locations along the median of South Claiborne Ave from Pine St. to Leonidas St. (June 5, 2020)

CCA report, July 2023. Inventory of dead and stressed trees, along the S. Claiborne Ave. median from Pine St to Leonidas St.

USACE, 2023. Reply to request from CCA for information regarding the responsibility for maintenance of public trees along S. Claiborne Ave. from Pine to Leonidas St., (e-mail from USACE, dated, July 19, 2023. (It stated that the Dept. of Parks and Parkways is responsible for maintaining the trees).