

Report by the Views HOA Special Committee to Review Landscaping Policies regarding responsibilities for maintenance of unimproved (forested) HOA property and recommended changes.

# Purpose

As requested, present to the HOA membership the comparison costs to eliminate/control invasive species on

- a) The HOA unimproved common land within 14' along DVD
- b) All of the unimproved HOA common land

# The Views of Asheville Development

- This development started in 1998 and the HOA was established in 2002.
- The HOA did not have a problem with invasive vines when it was developed as the hillside was basically clearcut. The pictures next show what the land looked like when it was clearcut.
- As a result the City of Asheville developed the Steep Slope Ordinance\*\* and mandated planting of trees along the roadside to reduce the loss of ground surrounding the area.
- The trees along the roadside were planted by the developer, some trees were planted by homeowners, and the remaining grew up as volunteer growth.

\*\* Ordinance of Asheville, NC Code of Ordinances Section 7-12-4 – Steep Slope and Ridgetop Development

# Pictures of the development



Pictures provided by Ernie Bott

# Background (1 of 2)

- During the HOA zoom meeting, 1 December 2022, a proposal was made that “.. The necessary maintenance of all \* HOA forested common land be maintained by the HOA budget”
  - \* not just the common land that is visible from DVD
- The HOA homeowners attending the meeting (and their proxies) tabled the request and approved formation of a Special Committee to make an assessment regarding the responsibilities for maintenance of unimproved HOA property and the costs involved.
- Kathy Gainey volunteered to chair the Committee and asked for volunteers to assist.

# Approved Landscaping Guidelines

- Section 7a.iii. Landscaping Easements & Right of Way
  - “...produces a 14 foot wide right of way outside of the curb on either shoulder”.
- Section 8.c. Landscaping within the common area or common elements:
  - “ii- Ensure maintenance of the first 3-5 feet of forested common land along DVD, to include the removal of invasive vines, pruning of trees and the removal of volunteer trees and shrubs.”
  - “iv- Remove or treat invasive tree species.”

# Background (2 of 2)

- 2018 & 2019 the HOA paid to remove invasive vines/shrubs from the HOA for approximately \$2,400.
- 2020 – 2022 – Projected budget constraints continued and Bill Uhle, Chandra Uhle, Kathy Gainey & Ed Donnelly cleared some sections of the HOA common land. Other homeowners personally paid to have professionals maintain the HOA common land near their home to rectify the growth and damage of the invasive vines.

# Committee Members

- Kathy Gainey
- Margret Stanley
- Gerry Stanley
- Richard Green
- Nancy Osborne



# Committee Work (1 of 2)

- Defined “invasive species”, “noxious weeds,” and “natural landscaping”.
  - Invasive Species – Used the North Carolina Native Plant (NCNPS) Listing of Invasive Plants in North Carolina.  
[Invasive, Non-Native Exotic Species List - North Carolina Native Plant Society \(ncwildflower.org\)](http://ncwildflower.org)
  - Noxious weeds: Poison ivy, Poison Oak and other tree climbing vines.
  - Natural landscaping: is the use of native plants and adapted species, including trees, shrubs, groundcover and grasses which are local to the geographic area . Natural landscaping is adapted to the climate, geography and hydrology and should require no pesticides, fertilizers and watering to maintain, given that native plants have adapted and evolved to local conditions over thousands of years.

# Committee Work (2 of 2)

- Developed two options for treating invasive species.
  - Marked areas for both options. One an extension of the present DVD area to merge the HOA right of way of 14 foot from the curb and the landscape policy of the first 3-5 feet from the forested area we drafted the area description to encompass both areas.
  - The second (in keeping with the motion from the meeting) encompassed all of the HOA forested common land.
- Coordinated with affected homeowners for accuracy.
- Developed contract and solicited bids from 11 local contractors for both options.
- Two contractors returned bids -Mountain Tree Air and Bartlett Tree Experts.

# Contract Development

- 1. Contract Option 1: Areas within the DVD right-of-way:** To remove and/or treat the listed invasive species and noxious weeds identified and located on the HOA common areas within 14 feet of the Distant View Drive curb (the approximate limit to the DVD right-of way) or the first 5 feet into the forested area whichever is larger, in areas not maintained under our current landscape contract. See attached **Sketch 1**.
- 2. Contract Option 2: All Areas of the HOA Property:** To remove and/or treat the listed invasive species and noxious weeds identified and located in the entire common areas that are not maintained under the current landscape contract. The area within the right-of-way scope of work in Contract 1 is integrated into Contract 2. See attached **Sketch 2** .



# Sketch 2 – All HOA Common Property



# Approach

- Use \$1,500 from the HOA landscape budget (previously increased dues to help with invasive vines).
- The contractor will only treat the vines, noxious weeds, bushes and trees (if found). This will decompose and may or may not need to be removed. The two herbicides Bartlett Tree Service will use are Sightline (Triclopyr) and Cheetah Pro (Glufosinate ammonium).
- May require a second contractor to remove debris if needed.

# Committee Findings

- The optimum time to do the work is when the plants, vines, and trees are taking the nutrients back into their roots system to prepare for the winter - end of July and end of September.
- Our first approach was spreading the work over three equivalent areas over a 3 year period to reduce the annual cost. We learned that it would be money down the drain so we revised our contract to include the treatment of the total development at once.
- The first 2 years require the most intensive treatment.
  - The third year the cost is unknown but should be 20-40% of the original annual treatment plan costs.
  - Thereafter, only preventative maintenance is required to maintain the property.

# Bid Comparison

<u>Evaluation Criteria for Invasive Species Bidders</u>					
Eval Criteria:	Weight of importantanc	Bidders:			
Option 2	Scale of 1 - 5				
	5 more important	Mountain Air	Score	Bartlett Tree Experts	Score
		\$4,751		\$12,680	
Cost	4	5	20	4	16
Reputation	5	1	5	5	25
Knowledge/Expertise	5	1	5	5	25
Quality of Bid	5	1	5	5	25
Ability to Start	2	3	6	5	10
Timeliness to finish	3	3	9	5	15
<b>Final Score for Each:</b>			<b><u>50</u></b>		<b><u>116</u></b>



# Contractor Recommendation

- If the HOA approves either Option #1 or Option #2, The Committee intends to work with Bartlett Tree Experts because of their expertise, reputation and quality of bid.

# Contractor #2:

## Bartlett Tree Experts

- Apply herbicide treatment to delineated buffer zones to control invasive vines, trees and briars.
- Provide two treatments at the end of July and end of September.
- Advantage: Excellent reviews for tree, shrub, vine care. Provides treatments for invasive vines for other HOAs and organizations.
- Disadvantage: Only treats does not remove debris
- Bid cost: Option 1: \$3,120 per year; Option 2: \$12, 680 per year
- Year three cost are projected to be less.

# Response by Bartlett on Long-term Impact of Treatment

What is the impact of the spraying on native plants?

Non-target effects on natives to be very very minimal. Anything treated will likely die/be affected. Specialist applying treatment is very careful.

What impact will dead plants have on possible soil erosion since we are in a steep slope situation?

Expect it to be minimal. Plenty of native plants in the area. Over time as the invasives die, other more desirable plants will seed in these areas.

Are there recommendations for native plants to plant that are resistant to the chemicals you use?

Project no replacement planting necessary. Mother nature will fill in these areas easily & quickly.

How many years will this maintenance treatment be required to maintain an invasive free environment?

Think eradication is not possible, but a very high level of control is possible and attainable. The first 2 years will be an intensive level of treatment, followed by another 2-3 years of low level treatment (roughly 20-40% of the original amount) & finally a very low amount of "maintenance." By year 4 or 5 you project a nominal treatment of a few hundred dollars a year where technician just spot treats once a year for new things coming in from neighboring properties, brought in by animals, wind, etc.

# Special Committee Recommendation

- The Special Committee recommends Option 2 – treatment for all the HOA common land.
- This will prevent the Views of Asheville from looking like some of the properties along Sweeten Creek and Oteen.
- Preserve our property values.

# Funding Options Considered

- HOA Current Operating Reserve Account balance is \$13,221.
  - The committee considered asking for some of that to apply to the first year to defray costs. However it is not available for use.
  - At the 2015 HOA Meeting homeowners voted “establishing a threshold of 50% of the annual assessment amount as the minimum balance to maintain in the HOA Annual Expenses Account”. This is to cover the first couple of months till the dues are paid and to cover unplanned emergency expenditures.
- HOA Reserve Account balance is : \$9,708
  - This project is not a capital expenditure. As well the board briefed you last year on upcoming HOA Capital Expenditures that are on the near and far horizon. Dues were increased as well to allocate \$4,750 every year to prepare for these.

## FOUR YEAR COST MODEL FOR INVASIVE SPECIES CONTRACT-OPTION 2

Budget Year	Contract Cost	From HOA Budget for Arborist-Vines	Special Assessment Required	First Option 25/5 Plan		
				25 Built Lots	5 Unbuilt Lots	Total HOA Assessment or Dues Increase
2023	\$12,680	\$1,500	<b>\$11,180</b>	\$407	\$202	\$11,185
				Due immediately		TOTAL HOA Assessment
2024	Assume \$12,680	\$1,500	<b>\$11,180</b>	\$407	\$202	\$11,185
				Due by end of June 2024		TOTAL HOA Assessment
2025	Estimate 40% of original  \$5,072	\$1,500	Convert to Annual Dues <b>\$3,572</b>	\$130	\$65	\$3,575
				<b>Per Year Increase</b>	<b>Per Year Increase</b>	<b>TOTAL HOA Dues Increase</b>
2026	\$5,072	\$1,500	Dues	Adjust to fit contract		

# HOA Board Slides

# Board of Directors Review

- Board of Directors were briefed and are split
  - Two support Option 2 (all forested HOA land): \$25.3K cost over 2 years
  - One supports Option 1 (HOA forest land along DVD): \$6.2k cost over 2 years



# Dissenting Board Member Comments

- Option 1 benefits all owners by keeping the drive along DVD to all lots clear of vines at a reasonable cost
- Option 2 concerns
  - Benefits not equally shared among all the owners
    - Several Lots have no HOA forested land behind/beside their house
    - Minimal benefits for them despite having to equally share in the cost
- Other large HOA costs expected in the near horizon
  - Three capital items (estimated cost in 2021 was \$9,000 each)
    - Retaining wall (near main stormwater basin parking area) is bulging in several spots
    - Secondary stormwater basin standpipe and drainpipe are both rusting
    - Rock Wall to the left of front entrance will meet its expected life in 5 Years
  - Potential need to hire a HOA Management Company to reduce workload on Board members
    - Cost estimate back in 2017 was \$6000/year, likely at least 2x that now

# HOA Funding Options

- \$1500 available in 2023 Landscape Budget for HOA forest land mx
- The HOA will need a special assessment to fund either option
  - Option 1 (treat first 15' or first 5' of forest land within DVD right of way)
    - \$3,120 Cost - \$1,500 available = \$1,620 required
    - HOA Special Assessment - **\$59 per developed lot, \$29.50 per undeveloped lot**
  - Option 2 (treat all HOA forest land)
    - \$12,680 Cost - \$1,500 available = \$11,180 required
    - HOA Special Assessment - **\$407 per developed lot, \$203.50 per undeveloped lot**
- Reminder: Both options require treatments over 2 years minimum to get the forest area under control
  - So, 2024 dues will also increase, as a minimum, by the above amounts

# Vote Options

After the discussion period, you will be asked to vote for one of the following options for the first year's funding:

- Option #1: Approve a \$1,620 special assessment (\$59 per developed lot and \$29.50 per undeveloped lot) to eliminate invasive vines, bushes, trees, and noxious weeds from the first 14 feet along DVD (or 5' from the start of the forest area whichever is greater). This includes 2 treatments this year (Aug and Sept)
- Option #2: Approve a \$11,180 special assessment (\$407 per developed lot and \$203.50 per undeveloped lot) to eliminate invasive vines, bushes, trees, and noxious weeds from all HOA owned forested land. This includes 2 treatments this year (Aug and Sept)

# Owner Questions, Comments, Discussion

# HOA Voting Rules

- Voting is the same as for the annual meeting – each lot has one vote
- Owners will vote by holding up the number of fingers they are voting
  - 1 per each lot owned plus 1 per each proxy they have been given
- Proxy votes must have been emailed to the Board Secretary by 1 August

# Vote Process

- Since special assessments are needed, a majority vote will determine which option, if any, will be approved and funded
  - Option 2 (\$407 per developed lot, \$203.50 per undeveloped lot) will be voted on first
  - If Option 2 fails to receive a majority:
    - We will then vote on Option 1 (\$59 per developed lot, \$29.50 per undeveloped lot)
  - If Option 1 fails to receive a majority
    - The \$1500 within the Landscape Budget set aside for forest management along Distant View Drive will still be used for that purpose
    - TPS or another arborist/landscaper will perform maintenance of the worst areas of forested common land along DVD by removing invasive vines/plants, pruning trees, and removing new volunteer growth

**HOA Special Meeting is  
Adjourned**