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News Release

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Coming to the rescue of urban wood

City and Sacramento Tree Foundation partner to seek market for wood from fallen trees

Wood from midtown camphor tree is among the first to be salvaged

The City and the Sacramento Tree Foundation are now able to do what has been frequently asked, particularly after a storm brings down large branches or a majestic dying tree needs to come down: “Can we have the wood?”

Today, the answer is yes. The Sacramento Tree Foundation is ramping up the first Urban Wood Rescue Program in the City. Having received a grant from the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (*CAL FIRE*), the time was ideal for the foundation to partner with the City.

So, when the giant camphor tree at 18th and Capitol must come down beginning Wednesday morning, Aug. 22, starting at 8 a.m., its trunk may live on in a piece of furniture through the program. The camphor tree needs to come down because it has been slowly dying over the last two years. Its removal is a matter of public safety.

The Midtown Business Association, The Handle District, and Paesanos and Mangia restaurants are throwing a special event to recognize the tree’s majestic canopy and its century old life of giving to the City on Tuesday, Aug. 21 from 5 to 6:30 p.m. The \$10 donation includes beverages and light food to benefit the wood rescue program. People are invited to stop by and “tie a yellow ribbon ‘round the ole camphor tree” beginning at 5 p.m. as part of the celebration.

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Wood rescue program, 2

Under the agreement with the foundation, the City will give wood at least 30 inches in diameter and 10 feet long to the foundation. Smaller pieces of high quality wood such as alder wood and walnut will also be turned over for the nonprofit to pass on to craftsman organizations at little or no charge. Larger pieces, sought after by businesses who want slabs, will likely be sold at a to-be-determined cost.

The City chips its green waste and sends what it doesn't use in its streetscapes to a co-generation power plant, where it provides fuel. Of the City's annual loads, at least three tractor trailers full of large trunks and branches previously trucked to the power plant will be rescued and serve a new purpose.

"We've often been asked what becomes of the wood, particularly from the removals of some of the City's oldest and most prominent trees that we are sad to lose. We have not had the resources or expertise to run a program like this with City property, so we're happy to partner with the Sacramento Tree Foundation who can," said Joe Benassini, the City's Urban Forester, adding "This is a sustainable program in its infancy, but may serve as a pilot effort for other cities to follow."

According to Ray Tretheway, the foundation's executive director, "few cities have logs the size of Sacramento's." He expects a growing demand for Sacramento's wood once the word gets out. "The City and the foundation is doing everything we can to protect and manage our urban trees. The foundation is working with local tree businesses, non profit woodworking groups, schools and artists to bring the wood of these majestic trees back as beautiful tabletops, benches and other works of art."

The grant is also providing the foundation with the loan of a portable saw mill and kiln for drying to allow communities to investigate, demonstrate, and/or research the feasibility of urban wood milling as a business venture.

For more information about the availability of wood from the City's urban forest, please call the Sacramento Tree Foundation at 916/924-8733.

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