

AGENDA

**City of University Heights, Iowa
Special Meeting and Work Session of City Council**

Monday, July 29, 2013

**Location: St. Andrew Church
Fellowship Hall, 1300 Melrose Ave.**

7:00 – 9:00 P.M.

Meeting called by Mayor Louise From

Time		Topic	Owner
7:00	Call to Order Special Meeting	Roll Call	Louise From
	City Business	<p>-Discussion of Mid-American Energy Overhead Utility Line on Sunset Street and Consideration of Options and Costs to Remove Existing Overhead Wire.</p> <p>-Present and Discuss Tree Planting Plan for Sunset Street.</p> <p>-Consideration of Resolution No. 13-14 authorizing the Mayor to sign and the Clerk to attest a 28E Agreement with the City of Coralville for fire protection services.</p> <p>-Consideration of Resolution No. 13-15 ratifying execution of Police Officer Training Expense Reimbursement Agreement.</p> <p>-Consideration of request from Officer Josh Beeks to reduce amount of reimbursement to the City for ILEA training and related expenses.</p>	Josiah Bilskemper Steve Ballard
	Close Special Meeting		
7:30	Call to Order Work Session	MPO-JC will discuss with council information on how to structure focus group sessions for public input related to redevelopment options of the St. Andrew Presbyterian Church property.	John Yapp, Kent Ralston
8:50	Public Input		
9:00	Adjournment		Louise From

7/31/13

All:

Here is a brief engineer report in advance of tonight's council meeting:

Agenda Item:

Discussion of Mid-American Energy Overhead Utility Line on Sunset Street and Consideration of Options and Costs to Remove Existing Overhead Wire.

Attached is a summary of a meeting held last week with Mid-American representative Dick Bock, Mayor From, Larry Wilson and myself. It provides the details of the options presented by Mid-American to remove an existing overhead service line on the west side of Sunset Street, just north of Oakcrest Avenue. Options to have this overhead wire removed were discussed as a way to prevent future conflict between the canopy of new trees and trimming requirements around the overhead wire.

Tonight, we will be looking for direction from council with regard to the Mid-American overhead utility line. Options include:

1. Do nothing at this time, leave the wire in place:
 - a. 5 of the 7 new trees under wire have shorter heights, and 2 trees are taller deciduous trees.
 - b. Depending on ultimate height of the trees, the city would want to be proactive with Mid-American to practice selective trimming if needed.
2. Do nothing at this time, plan for removal of the wire in the near future:
 - a. Intent could be to pursue removing the wire in the next year or more, but specifically budgeting for the costs in upcoming budgets.
3. Have the overhead wire relocated by Mid-American right now, in conjunction with the sidewalk construction:
 - a. Choose the underground relocation option (\$9,944)
 - b. Choose the overhead relocation option (\$6,538)
 - c. The costs for both of these options are less than the rough estimate Mid-American was able to provide prior to the regular July meeting.

The DOT and FHWA have told us that costs associated with relocating this overhead line are not eligible for reimbursement funds because the work is not necessary for the sidewalk to be built. Therefore, the costs for the work would be paid directly to Mid-American, and would be separate from the sidewalk project costs.

To date, the "projected" construction phase costs of the Sunset Street Wide Sidewalk project are about \$20,000 under what was included in the city budget.

With respect to the DOT reimbursement process, the total project costs are "projected" to be around \$280,000. The amount eligible for reimbursement is 80% of this value, or approximately \$225,000. The city was awarded \$215,000 in funding. Therefore, the project will utilize the full funding amount, and have about \$10,000 in costs that are paid in full (overall reimbursement rate of about 77% = 215k/280k).

Agenda Item:

Present and Discuss Tree Planting Plan for Sunset Street

Attached is the current draft of the revised Sunset Street Tree Master Plan. It incorporates all revisions since last August based on meetings and discussions with each property owner. At the meeting, copy will be provided for council, brief summary of revisions, and answer any questions. If council desires to take some type of formal action on the revised plan, this can be included in a future council meeting.

Let me know if any questions, thanks.

Josiah D. Bilskemper, P.E.
Shive-Hattery, Inc.
2834 Northgate Drive
Iowa City, IA 52245
(319) 354-3040

MEETING SUMMARY

PROJECT: UHTS 2013 - Sunset Street Sidewalk

MEETING DATE: July 23, 2013
3:00 p.m.
City Office

ISSUE DATE: July 24, 2013

ATTENDING: Dick Bock, Mid-American Energy
Louise From, UHTS Mayor
Larry Wilson, UHTS Resident
Josiah Bilskemper, Shive-Hattery

PURPOSE: Discuss and Evaluate Options for Existing Overhead Wire on Sunset

DISCUSSION ITEMS:

1. Josiah provided a brief review of the meeting he had with Dick Bock prior to the July council meeting, and an update on two related questions asked by council at that meeting.
 - a. The DOT has responded that additional utility costs associated with this overhead line would not be eligible project costs because any changes are not *required* to allow the sidewalk construction. Therefore, if the council decides to undertake any of this work, it would not be eligible for reimbursement through the sidewalk project.
 - b. A meeting occurred with the landscape architect to determine if he would recommend further changes to the tree planting plan if the existing overhead wire were to be removed. He does not propose any changes, as he feels there is a good mix of deciduous trees interspersed with ornamental trees. He likes this layout to ensure the harmony of spring bloom colors and fall foliage colors, and provides a variation in tree heights.
2. Larry provided a review of his involvement with the tree planting plan, and a background of why the plan was created.
3. The Mid-American tree trimming procedures were discussed. When trees are trimmed around wires, they are trimmed to account for 3-years of growth. While there are certainly examples of locations where this has not occurred, this is how trimming is to occur.
4. The locations and planning for the new pole locations were discussed. There were several meetings with Shive-Hattery designers and Dick during the sidewalk design back in 2012 to try and identify the options for locating the new poles and finding the best available location for them to move. There were several factors that limited where the new poles could be located on the west side of the street. These included the clear zones of the new sidewalk and Sunset Street, the existing overhead wire connections to poles on the east side of Sunset, the angles of the existing overhead wire services going to the backyards of the houses on Mahaska Drive, and also trying to leave as much open space between the sidewalk and the street for planting of new trees.



5. The presence of other utility lines on the Mid-American poles was discussed. The only overhead line running north-south between these poles is the Mid-American wire being discussed. Dick indicated he didn't think Mid-American could prevent another utility company (for example, Mediacom, Qwest, or Century Link) from adding another overhead line in this area in the future, this would probably have to be something only the city could address with other utility companies. While possible this could happen, it was thought to be unlikely that utility companies would spend money to reconfigure their service lines when they already have established connections to each house. Once the new trees begin to grow, it was also thought unlikely that new wires would be placed through existing trees, especially if the Mid-American wire is not there (the other utility companies typically follow the Mid-American overhead lines so that they get the benefit of Mid-American tree trimming around their lines).
6. Dick reviewed the two options for eliminating the existing overhead wire that runs parallel to the new sidewalk just north of Oakcrest Avenue (about 250 linear feet), and provided updated costs for each option (for reference, attached is the July 9 meeting summary which provides the details of each option, and also PDF drawings of each option that Dick provided at the July 23 meeting). Now that Dick has had time to review each option in detail and determine the facility designs needed, the costs are lower than the rough estimates that Dick was able to provide just standing on-site on July 9.
 - a. Underground Option - \$9,944
 - 1) This option eliminates the overhead wire by placing it underground in a conduit between each pole.
 - 2) This cost does not include any site restoration (tear up and replace sod/grass), as the intent would be to have the work done before the sidewalk contractor final grades and sods the area.
 - 3) There are a number of telecom service lines in this area, and if the underground drilling route for the conduit gets close to these lines, the Mid-American drilling contractor will have to dig down and locate each line before installing their conduit. This is not an additional cost, but takes more time to complete.
 - b. Overhead Option - \$6,538
 - 1) This option eliminates the overhead wire by reconfiguring some of the existing wire crossings over Sunset Street, adding a new utility pole in the right-of-way on the east side of Sunset Street, and adding transformers on two poles.
 - 2) After the meeting, a site visit was made to identify where the new pole would have to be installed on the east side of Sunset Street. A wood stake with green ribbon was placed adjacent to the Grandview Court entrance drive to indicate the approximate location where the new pole would have to be installed. White spray paint was also placed on the ground.
7. It was determined that there were four options for council to consider at the July 29 meeting:
 - a. Take no action with respect to the overhead wire. The sidewalk contractor will finish the project and plant the new trees. The presence of the overhead wire could be addressed in the future when the trees grow taller, or left in place with future trimming to be coordinated with Mid-American.

- 1) Of the 7 new trees to be planted adjacent to this line, 5 are shorter varieties (20-25 foot height expected) and 2 are taller (40' and 75'). Depending on where you are standing between the poles (the line sags in the middle), the height of the overhead wire is estimated to be 22-26 feet above the sidewalk.
 - b. Pursue either the underground or overhead option, but not at this time, budgeting for the cost in the near future. The sidewalk contractor will finish the project and plant the new trees. There will be several years before the height of the trees conflict with the wire. Anticipate increase in cost depending on number of years the work is pushed out. Also some additional cost to account for site restoration in the future (remove/replace sod).
 - c. Authorize the underground relocation at the July 29 meeting. Mid-American will pursue getting the work coordinated with their conduit drilling sub-contractor in August before the sod and trees are installed by the sidewalk contractor (sod installation after September 1; tree planting after October 1).
 - d. Authorize the overhead relocation at the July 29 meeting. Mid-American will schedule this work with their own forces to be completed in conjunction with the planting of new trees by the sidewalk contractor.
8. Josiah is to review the FY13-14 streets and sidewalk budget and determine if these costs could be included within any of these already budgeted items.

The preceding is our interpretation of items discussed and decisions reached. Please contact the undersigned with any discrepancies.

Sincerely,

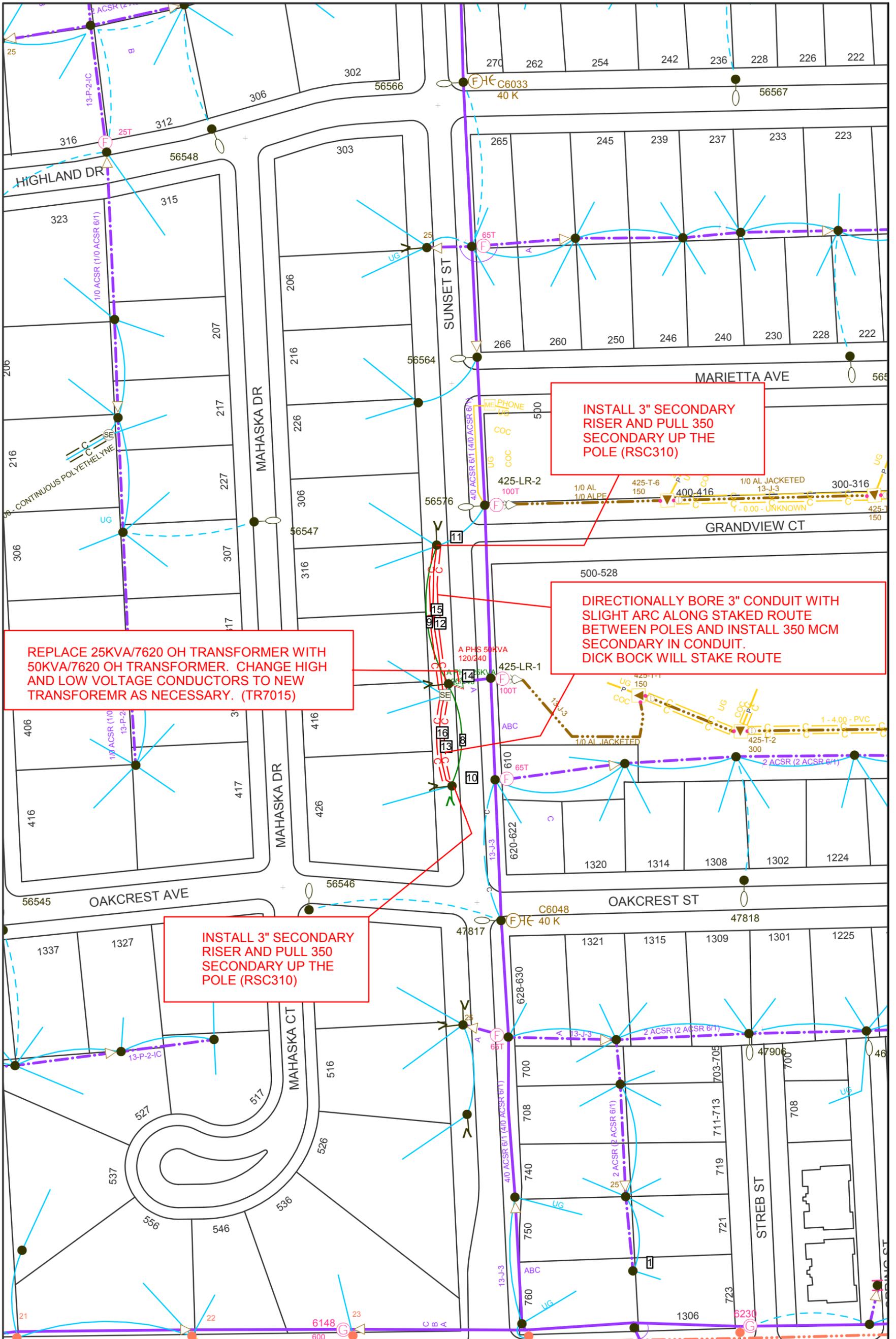
SHIVE-HATTERY, INC.



Josiah Bilskemper, PE

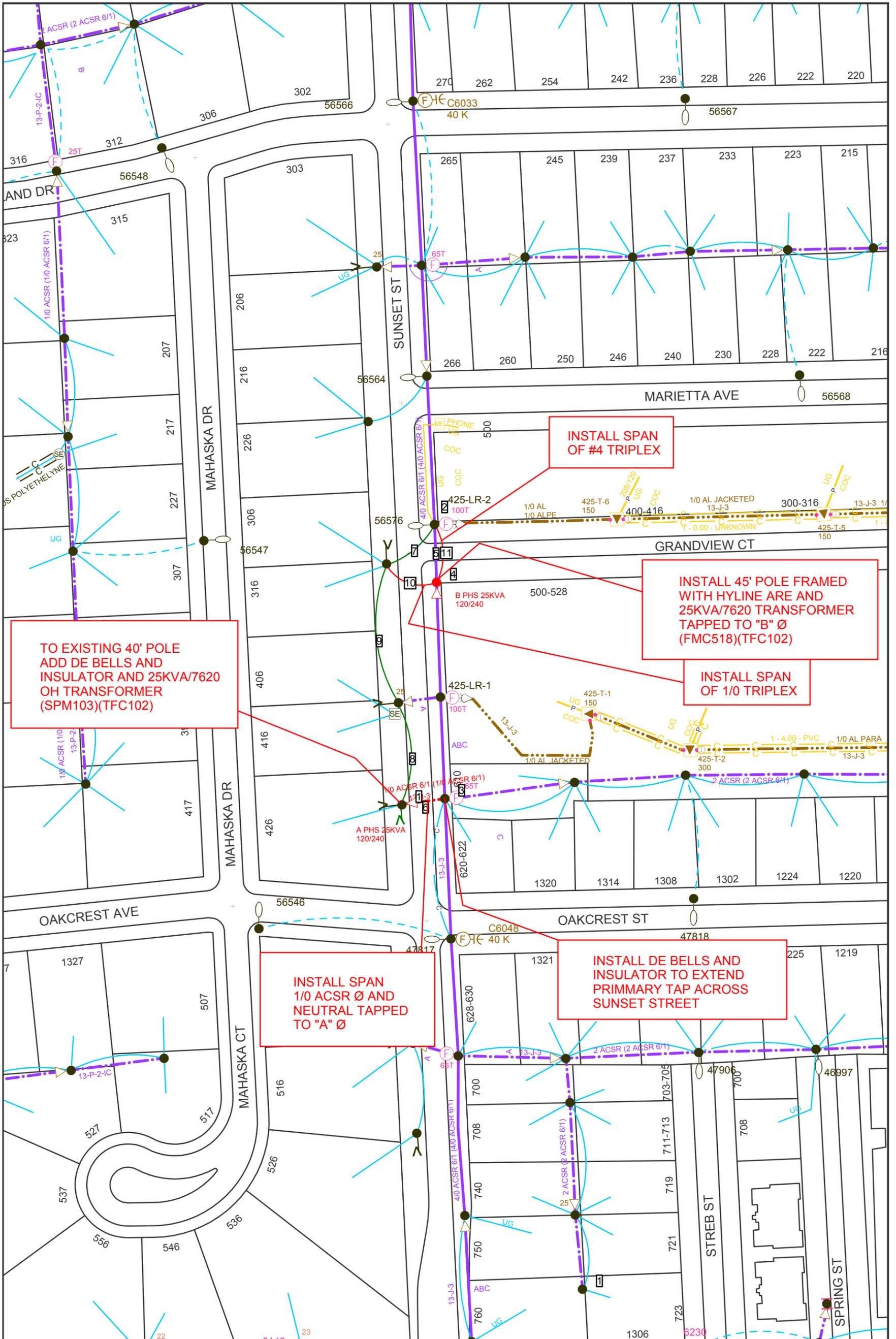
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Copy: Attendees
Kevin Froelich, S-H
Kevin Trom, S-H
Eric Munchel, S-H



	Cust: UNIVERSITY HTS OH RELOCATION Addr: 416 MAHASKA City: UNIVERSITY HEIGHTS	DR X = 2,170.616 Y = 608.159	WMS_REV:2359923-2 Date: 7/15/2013 Scale: 1 in = 100 ft Designer: BOCK,RICHARD L
	Job Desc: Install 45' pole, 2-25kva/7620 transformers, 1 span of 1 Ph 1/0 ACSR primary and 1 span of 1/0 triplex secondary. The town of University Heights has requested this additional relocation.		
NOTE: This drawing reflects facilities in place at the time of its preparation and is subject to change at any time. For current facility information, please contact MidAmerican Energy Company. Further, MidAmerican Energy Company disclaims all liability and responsibility for all claims and damages including but not limited to, personal injury, death and property damage, resulting from any authorized or unauthorized use of, or reliance upon, this drawing for any purpose.			

DISCLAIMER OF LIABILITY



TO EXISTING 40' POLE
ADD DE BELLS AND
INSULATOR AND 25KVA/7620
OH TRANSFORMER
(SPM103)(TFC102)

INSTALL SPAN
OF #4 TRIPLEX

INSTALL 45' POLE FRAMED
WITH HYLINE ARE AND
25KVA/7620 TRANSFORMER
TAPPED TO "B" Ø
(FMC518)(TFC102)

INSTALL SPAN
OF 1/0 TRIPLEX

INSTALL SPAN
1/0 ACSR Ø AND
NEUTRAL TAPPED
TO "A" Ø

INSTALL DE BELLS AND
INSULATOR TO EXTEND
PRIMARY TAP ACROSS
SUNSET STREET

	Cust: UNIVERSITY HTS OH RELOCATION Addr: 416 MAHASKA City: UNIVERSITY HEIGHTS	DR X = 2,170,599 Y = 608,136	WMS_REV:2359923-1 Date: 7/13/2013 Scale: 1 in = 100 ft Designer: BOCK,RICHARD L
	Job Desc: Install 45' pole, 2-25kva/7620 transformers, 1 span of 1 Ph 1/0 ACSR primary and 1 span of 1/0 triplex secondary. The town of University Heights has requested this additional relocation.		
NOTE: This drawing reflects facilities in place at the time of its preparation and is subject to change at any time. For current facility information, please contact MidAmerican Energy Company. Further, MidAmerican Energy Company disclaims all liability and responsibility for all claims and damages including but not limited to, personal injury, death and property damage, resulting from any authorized or unauthorized use of, or reliance upon, this drawing for any purpose.			

MEETING SUMMARY

PROJECT: UHTS 2013 - Sunset Street West Right-of-Way

MEETING DATE: July 9, 2013
10:00 a.m.
On-Site

ISSUE DATE: July 9, 2013

ATTENDING: Dick Bock, Mid-American Energy
Josiah Bilskemper, Shive-Hattery

DISCUSSION ITEMS:

1. Options were discussed to eliminate the existing north-south overhead wire that runs between three utility poles on the west side of Sunset Street from 306 to 426 Mahaska. The three existing poles have overhead services to each of the five houses in this stretch, and these poles must stay in place to provide these overhead services. This discussion here is limited to options for eliminating the overhead line between these poles.
2. An UNDERGROUND option was discussed:
 - a. New HDPE conduit could be horizontally directional drilled (HDD) underground between these poles on the west side of the street.
 - b. The underground conduit could be slightly curved in towards the edge of the new sidewalk between each pole to provide greater separation from the new trees that will be planted closer to the street. However, there are several existing underground telecom lines that are underground near the edge of the new sidewalk, and their exact location will determine how far the new conduit could curve away from the street.
 - c. The underground conduit would allow damaged wires inside the conduit to be pulled out from either end, with new wire pulled back into the conduit in the same way. Unless there is a problem pulling the wires, this procedure would not require digging near the sidewalk and new trees to complete repairs.
 - d. To install the underground conduit, a clear space (approx. 20-feet) will be needed near the existing utility poles to set the drilling machine. Therefore, the new trees in these areas should not be planted until after the drilling work is complete. Similarly, the restoration of sod around the poles should be delayed if possible until the drilling is completed.
 - e. The cost of this UNDERGROUND option is approximately \$12,000. The cost would increase if additional restoration is needed such as replacing sod at each utility pole. If directed by the city to complete this work, Mid-American will design the work order and finalize the cost.
 - f. The drilling work would be completed by a Mid-American sub-contractor out of the Des Moines area. After that is complete, Mid-American crews would complete the installation of new underground lines, the necessary modifications and connections at each pole, and the removal of the existing overhead line.



3. An OVERHEAD option was discussed:
 - a. The north segment of this overhead line (Line #18) could be eliminated by setting a new utility pole in the right-of-way on the east side of Sunset (across the street). This new pole would be just on the south side of the entrance drive to Grandview Court apartments. There is already an existing utility pole just on the north side of this entrance drive. The existing pole on the north side of the drive cannot be used because it has a full-height electric riser that prevents a new transformer from being placed on the pole. A new transformer is needed if this line (#18) is to be eliminated on the west side. The new pole would have a transformer and low voltage wires would be extended over Sunset to the existing pole.
 - b. The south segment of this overhead line (#17) could be eliminated by installing a new transformer on the existing pole already in the west right-of-way (sidewalk side) near 426 Mahaska. New high-voltage wires (2 wires) would be extended across Sunset Street to replace the low-voltage wires already running across the street at this location.
 - c. The cost of this OVERHEAD option is approximated at closer to \$15,000 due to the cost associated with providing and setting a new pole on the east side of the street.
 - d. All of the work associated with this option is completed by Mid-American crews. There is potential for longer delay in the work being completed as these crews may be called out for repair situations when they arise.
4. The schedule for Mid-American to complete the work of these options was discussed:
 - a. Once Mid-American receives signed approval from the city, they will complete the design of the work order and get this into their system (approximately two weeks). They are currently a minimum of four weeks behind on their current field work.
 - b. For example, if the council decided to pursue one of these options, and provided approval at the July 9 council meeting, the work would not likely occur until the end of August at the earliest. Similarly, if a decision to proceed was provided at the August meeting, the timeframe moves to the end of September.
5. We have not yet received an updated construction schedule from the Sunset sidewalk contractor (Vieth Construction); we have asked to have this provided this week.
6. After the meeting, I made a call to the DOT Office of Systems Planning and left a message asking about the potential for utility costs to be included in the current Sunset sidewalk project. I have not heard back from them at this time, but anticipate the process might involve a potentially lengthy review period to determine whether the work would be considered eligible for reimbursement. None of the work would be able to begin until that determination was made.
7. Of the two options discussed, Mid-American can complete either one if the city requests. All things being equal, their preference is to have lines overhead because they can be seen, but underground installations are not uncommon. If the city wants to eliminate the overhead line, I would recommend the underground option as it does not involve setting another utility pole in the right-of-way as the overhead option requires.

The preceding is our interpretation of items discussed and decisions reached. Please contact the undersigned with any discrepancies.

Sincerely,

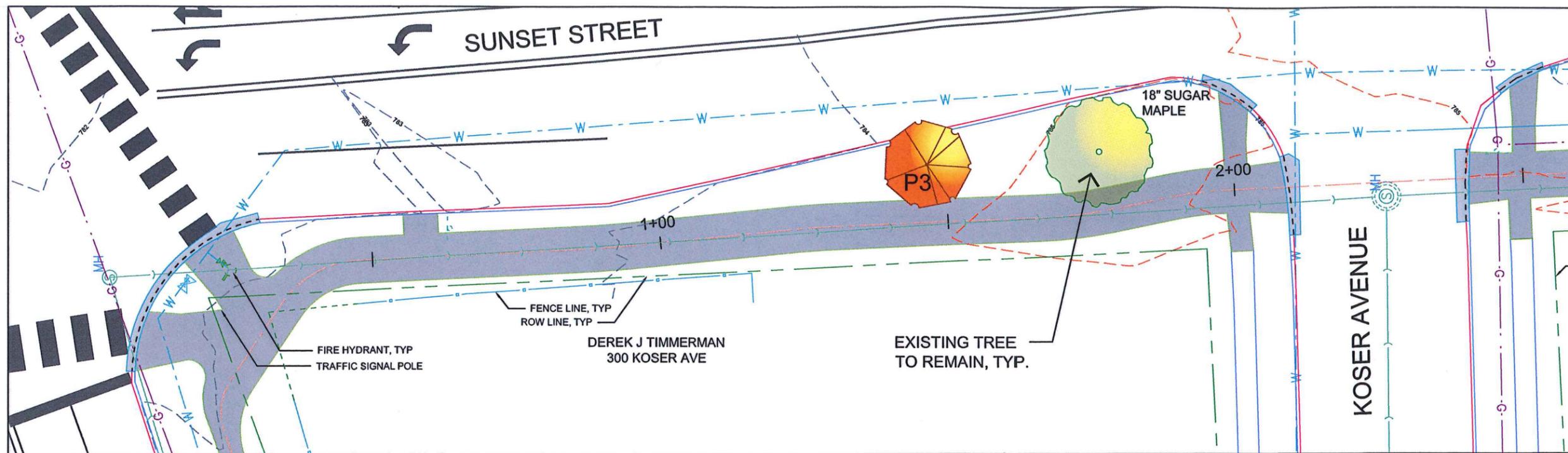
SHIVE-HATTERY, INC.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Josiah Bilskemper". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Josiah Bilskemper, PE

JDB/bad

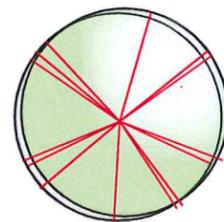
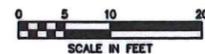
Copy: Attendees
Mayor and Council, City of University Heights
Kevin Trom and Eric Munchel, S-H



SUNSET STREET TREE MASTER PLAN

CITY OF UNIVERSITY HEIGHTS, IOWA (SH #113102-0)
 REVISION #1: 18 JULY 2013

SHEET 1 OF 3



DECIDUOUS TREE SCHEDULE - (ORNAMENTAL TREE SCHEDULE - SHEET 2)

Code	Tree Name	Height	Spread	Quantity
T1	AUTUMN BLAZE MAPLE (ACER x FREEMANII)	60' HT. x 50' SPD.	QTY: 4 / (2)	
T2	AMERICAN HORNBEAM (CARPINUS CAROLINIA)	30' HT. x 20' SPD.	QTY: 1 / (1)	
T3	SHADEMASTER HONEYLOCUST (GLEDITSIA T.I.)	40' HT. x 35' SPD.	QTY: 2 / (2)	
T4	QUERCUS RUBRA (NORTHERN RED OAK)	75' HT. x 50' SPD.	QTY: 5 / (1)	

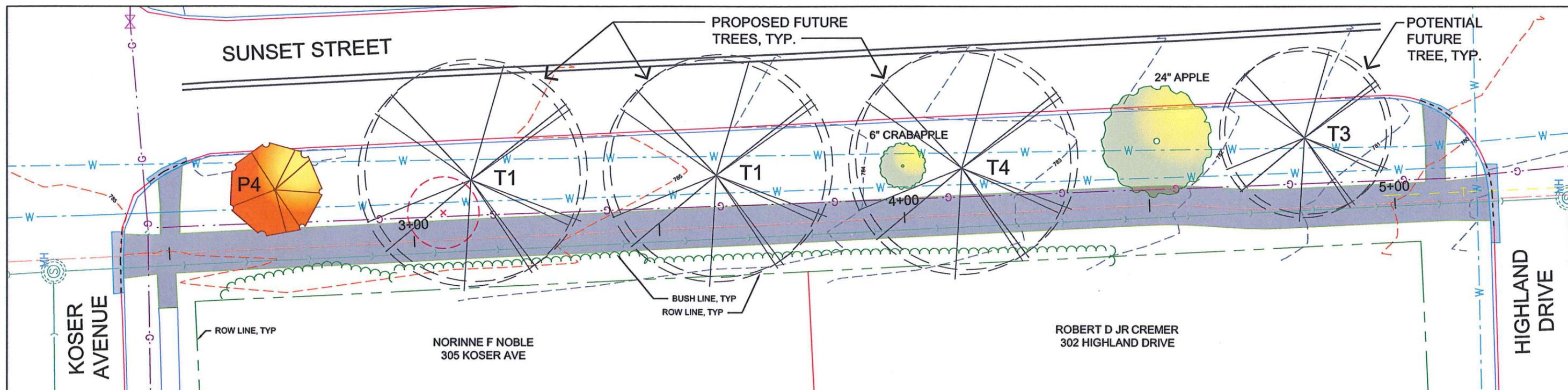
NOTE: NEW TREE SYMBOLS SHOWN ON MASTER PLAN INDICATE APPROXIMATE SPREAD DIAMETER AT INTERMEDIATE PERIOD OF 20± YEARS.

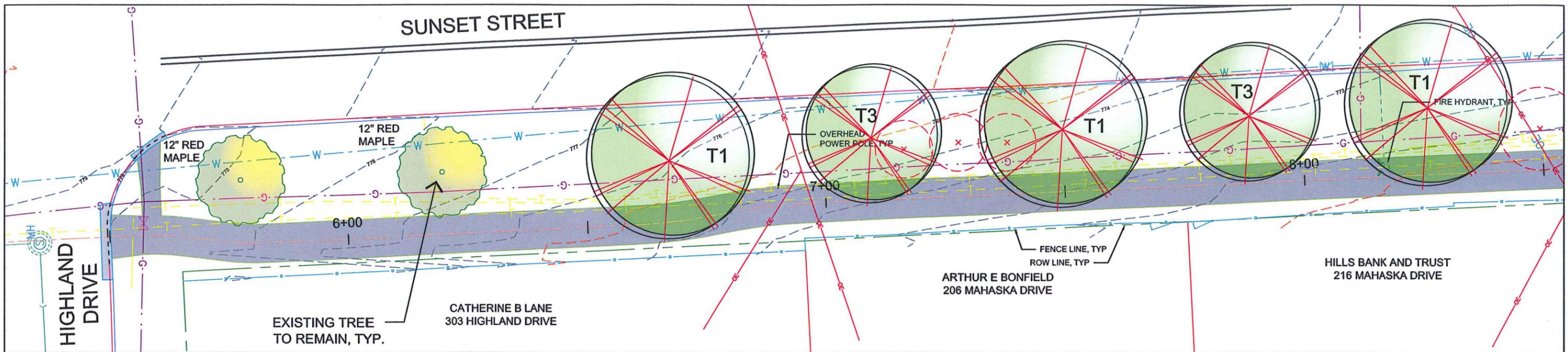
FUTURE LOCATIONS

2013 SUNSET SIDEWALK PROJECT

STREET TREE DATA

- 17 EXISTING TREES TO BE REMOVED
- 11 EXISTING TREES TO REMAIN
- 12 NEW DECIDUOUS TREES (SIDEWALK PROJECT)
- 6 FUTURE DECIDUOUS TREE LOCATIONS
- 11 NEW ORNAMENTAL TREES (SIDEWALK PROJECT)





SUNSET STREET TREE MASTER PLAN
 CITY OF UNIVERSITY HEIGHTS, IOWA (SH #113102-0)
 REVISION #1: 18 JULY 2013

SHEET 2 OF 3

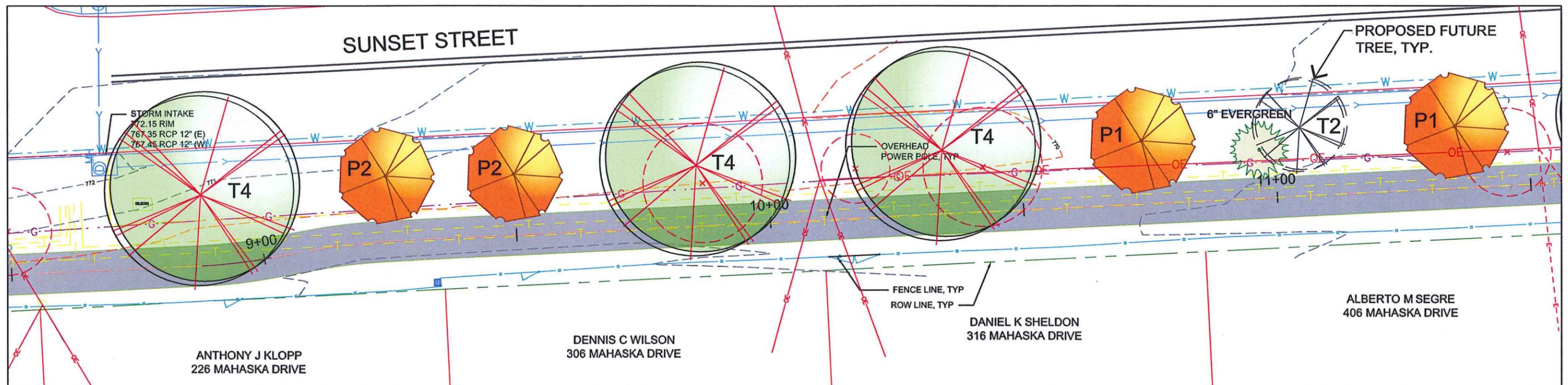


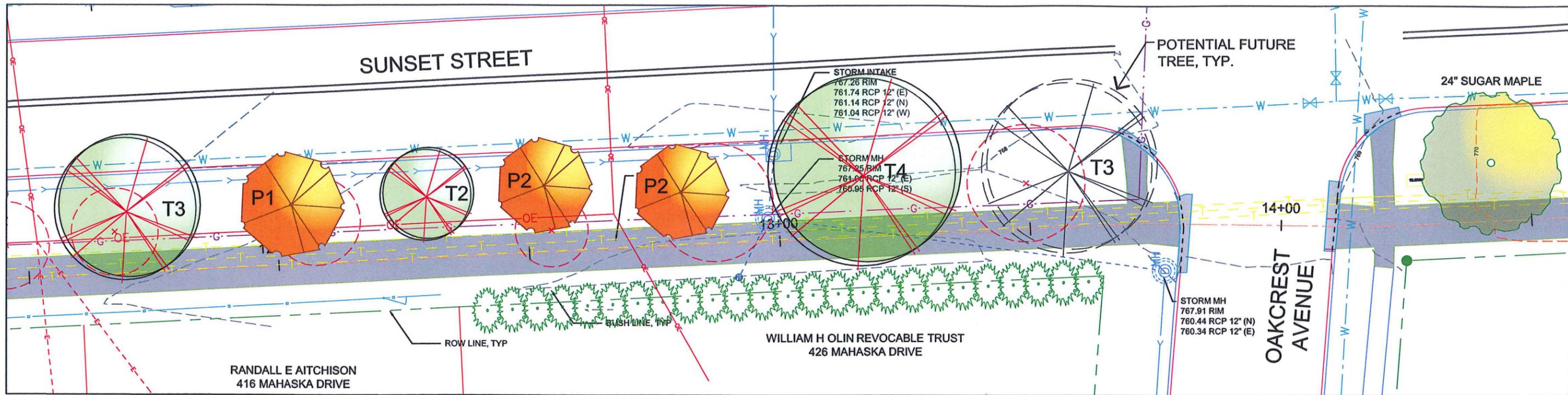
ORNAMENTAL TREE SCHEDULE - (DECIDUOUS TREE SCHEDULE - SHEET 1)

P1	EASTERN REDBUD (CERCIS CANADENSIS)	25' HT. x 30' SPD.	QTY: 3
P2	WINTER KING HAWTHORN (CRATEAGUS VIRIDIS 'W. K.')	20' HT. x 25' SPD.	QTY: 4
P3	SNOWCLOUD SERVICEBERRY (AMELANCHIER LAEVIS 'SNOWCLOUD')	25' HT. x 15' SPD.	QTY: 2
P4	CHINA SNOW PEKING LILAC (SYRINGA PEKINESIS 'MORTON')	25' HT. x 20' SPD.	QTY: 2

NOTE: NEW TREE SYMBOLS SHOWN ON MASTER PLAN INDICATE APPROXIMATE SPREAD DIAMETER AT INTERMEDIATE PERIOD OF 20± YEARS.

2013 SUNSET
 SIDEWALK PROJECT

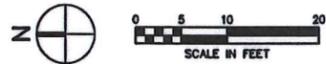




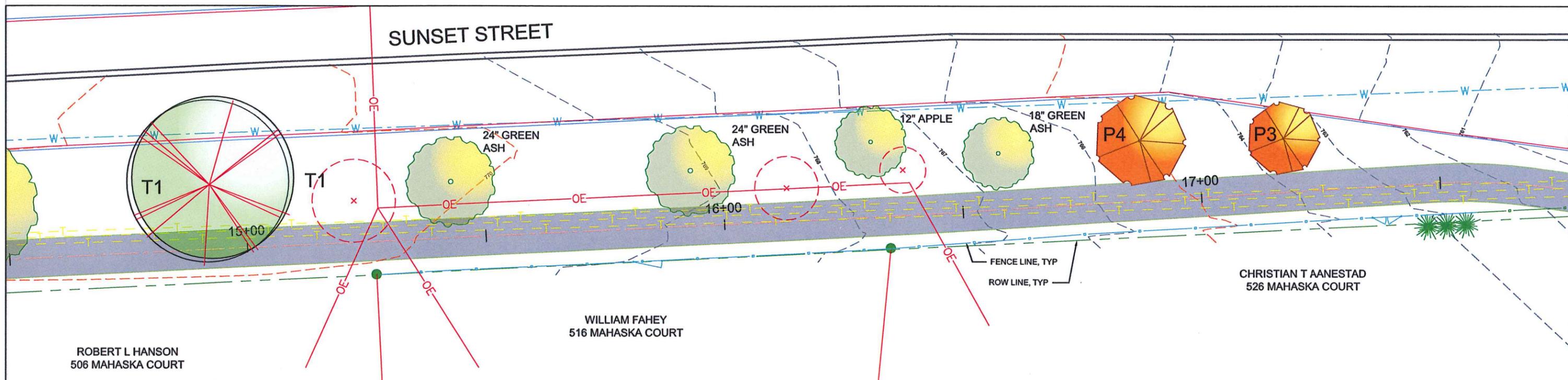
SUNSET STREET TREE MASTER PLAN

CITY OF UNIVERSITY HEIGHTS, IOWA (SH #113102-0)
REVISION #1: 18 JULY 2013

SHEET 3 OF 3



SEE SHEET 1 FOR DECIDUOUS TREE SCHEDULE
AND SHEET 2 FOR ORNAMENTAL TREE SCHEDULE



28E AGREEMENT

THIS AGREEMENT entered into by and between the City of Coralville, 1512 7th Street, Coralville, Iowa 52241, hereinafter referred to as “Coralville”; and the City of University Heights, Iowa, hereinafter referred to as “University Heights.”

WHEREAS, Coralville has been providing fire protection to University Heights under an agreement dated March 14, 1978, with subsequent amendments thereto; and

WHEREAS, Coralville and University Heights have discussed entering into a new agreement whereby the annual fee paid to Coralville will increase via the Consumer Price Index; and

WHEREAS, the City Attorney of Coralville has drafted this 28E Agreement to accomplish the same.

WHEREAS, it is necessary for Coralville and ICCSD to enter into an agreement pursuant to Chapter 28E of the Code of Iowa (2013) to outline the responsibilities of each party.

NOW, THEREFORE, IN CONSIDERATION OF THE MUTUAL COVENANTS AND CONDITIONS CONTAINED HEREIN, THE PARTIES AGREE AS FOLLOWS:

I. **PURPOSE.** Coralville shall provide fire protection services to University Heights during the term of this Agreement.

II. **DURATION.** The parties hereto agree this Agreement shall be effective upon its execution by both parties and remain in effect for an initial term of five (5) years and will continue until terminated by either party as discussed below.

III. **ADMINISTRATION.** The Fire Chief of Coralville and City Council of University Heights shall administer this Agreement on behalf of the cities.

IV. **COMPENSATION FOR SERVICES.** University Heights agrees that it shall compensate Coralville for providing fire protection services to University Heights as follows:

Fiscal Year 2014: \$30,122.74

For each Fiscal Year after, the total annual fee payable to Coralville shall increase annually by an amount equivalent to the percentage change in the CPI for each current year over the CPI for the prior year. For purposes of this Agreement, “CPI” refers to the Consumer Price Index, which shall mean the Consumer Price Index, U.S. City Average, Urban Wage Earners and Clerical Workers, All Items (base index year 1982-4 = 100) as published by the United States Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Said payments shall be made to Coralville semiannually in an amount of 50% of the total annual fee. Said payments to Coralville shall be made to Coralville within 30 days of invoice by Coralville.

V. TERMINATION

Either party to this Agreement may terminate this Agreement by providing six (6) months' written notice to the other party by delivering written notice of the same to the City Clerk of the other city.

VI. MODIFICATIONS TO THE AGREEMENT

Coralville and University Heights acknowledge that from time to time it may be to their mutual advantage to modify the terms and conditions of this Agreement. In that event, both parties agree that any mutually agreed upon modifications shall be allowable as they may become necessary or desirable to implement the general purpose of this Agreement; provided, however, that no waiver, change, modification or amendment of this Agreement shall be binding upon either party unless in writing and signed by the affected party. The waiver of wither party hereto of a breach of any provision of this Agreement shall not operate or be construed as a waiver of any subsequent breach of that provision by the same party, or of any other provision or condition in this Agreement.

VII. INDEMNITY AND HOLD HARMLESS

University Heights hereby agrees to indemnify, defend and hold harmless Coralville, its officers, agents, and employees, against any and all claims, suits, actions, debts damages, costs, charges, and expenses, including court costs and reasonable attorney's fees, and against any and all liability for property damage and personal injury, including death resulting directly or indirectly therefrom, arising from providing fire protection services to University Heights.

VIII. APPROVAL

For reference purposes, this Agreement is dated this ____ day of _____, 2013. It has been approved as required by law by the City Council of the City of Coralville and the City Council of University Heights on the dates as indicated below.

IX. FILING. Upon approval and execution of this Agreement by Coralville and University Heights, the City Clerk of Coralville shall file this Agreement with the Office of the Iowa Secretary of State as required by law.

(SIGNATURE PAGE OF CITY OF CORALVILLE TO 28E AGREEMENT)

Dated: _____

CORALVILLE:

Jim L. Fausett, Mayor

ATTEST:

Thorsten J. Johnson, City Clerk

(SIGNATURE PAGE OF UNIVERSITY HEIGHTS TO
28E AGREEMENT)

Dated: _____

UNIVERSITY HEIGHTS:

Louise From, Mayor

ATTEST:

Chris Anderson, City Clerk



Date: July 29, 2013
To: Mayor Louise From, City of University Heights
From: John Yapp; Executive Director
Kent Ralston; Assistant Transportation Planner
Re: Focus group options for input on St. Andrew Church property redevelopment

You had asked for information on how to structure a focus group session for public input and reaction related to development options for the St. Andrew Church property. This memorandum describes the standard format which can be used to effectively stimulate conversation and provide a vehicle for gathering public input with a large group of participants. We've used variations of this format in the past and have had good results with groups of 100 or more. In general, with a large group it is advantageous to break up into numerous small groups to facilitate dialogue, to allow multiple voices to be heard, and to avoid vocal individuals from dominating the larger group. General lessons we have learned include:

- It is important to identify clear goals with respect to the type of information you want to receive. If the goals are not clear the input may be off-topic and of little use. We recommend the City Council identify the topics and goals ahead of time.
- Have images, concepts, photography, maps and/or other visual aids for participants to view – text alone may not be sufficient. It is important for participants to have viable development concepts to react to, particularly given the reality of the zoning of the property, past development concepts for the property and viable development options which are on the table.
- Have a moderator who can keep each group on task and on schedule. Otherwise 'strong' participants can dominate the small group with a single issue.

General Format

Step 1: The moderator provides a brief overview/presentation of the topic/development alternatives at hand and discusses the meeting format and desired outcomes.

Step 2: Participants break down into groups of 5-10 and identify a recorder and a reporter. The recorder may be a staff-person, or a member of the public. We recommend the reporter be a member of the public.

Step 3: The moderator asks each group to discuss a certain topic (i.e. access, building density, open space, etc.) for 15-20 minutes, in the context of development alternatives for the property. Moderator(s) visit groups to listen, answer questions, and stimulate conversation.

Step 4: The moderator asks groups to stop and move on to the next topic for 15-20 minutes - and so on. The role of the moderator is to ensure each group has opportunity to discuss each of the important topics (which have been identified), and to avoid a group becoming fixated on any one topic to the detriment of other topics.

Step 5: Reporters from each group spend 5-10 minutes sharing their groups' thoughts with all participants at the end of the session. This input is then collected and summarized for the City Council and other interested parties.

With this format each participant is given the opportunity to discuss each and every topic area for 15-20 minutes at the same table with the same small group. Each small group will have the opportunity to explore all the identified topics and have the potential to see relationships between topics and issues.

We believe it is important for the City Council to identify clear goals for this type of public input session and to have information on-hand for participants to react to. Our understanding is there are some parameters for the development of the St Andrew property given the existing zoning – these parameters should be defined ahead of time to ensure practical input. With well-defined goals, we believe that one focus group meeting should be adequate for the Council to obtain the feedback desired. We would also be happy to assist with developing a webpage / survey to collect additional input (and to provide an input opportunity for those not able to attend the focus group meeting, or who would like to provide individual input) should the Council wish to provide that opportunity.

We will be available at your July 29th work session to discuss this general format and variations thereof.