

Dear Mountain Shadows Community -

Hope this message finds you well and ready to enjoy the fall and approaching Holiday season. As the end of my term as Director of Landscape draws to an end, I'd like to quickly recap some of the accomplishments achieved over the last three years of my tenure:

- The first item worth mentioning is the creation of a Landscape Committee. This small but mighty group guided me through three of the five desertscape upgrades. We created a list of approved rocks and plants to be used in the upgrades.
- Our day-to-day communication with O'Connell improved significantly due to a periodic report I requested. In this report, all past and future projects are listed inclusive of photographs and the current conditions of each of the five upgraded areas. The report also gives the Committee a sense of how O'Connell employees spend their time and enables us to see where we may need to cut or add labor hours.
- The yearly contract with O'Connell has gone through some minor changes. These updates are partially related to the labor needed to maintain our new desert scape and the overall cost of labor. Post Covid the price of materials increased, and we noticed price hikes. BUT with good negotiations we have managed to keep the yearly dollar increase to an average of 4% a year. I take pride in sharing our relationship with O'Connell is outstanding. So much so that often they do work for us at no cost like removing and disposing of dead trees or plants.
- Lastly, and perhaps the most memorable and challenging project under my direction, was the orchestration, implementation and maintenance of our five desertscape upgraded areas. Starting in the fall of 2022 we embarked on this ambitious undertaking, which had been postponed for years. Phase I was completed in 2022, followed by Phases II and III completed in 2023, and Phases IV and V which finished in 2024. Altogether, approximately 72,000 square feet of turf were removed and replaced with desert scape. The fiscal impact on our HOA expenses was positively significant as we are now about 30% more efficient in our water use and expenses. As for the investment in the desert scape upgrades, the total cost was about \$350,000.00. Of this amount, MS received rebates from DW and the City of about \$230,000.00. Hence, our out-of-pocket cost was in the neighborhood of \$115,000.00 or roughly 35% of the total cost. We experienced some loss of trees and plants because of changes in irrigation systems and the heat waves of the summer months, which are here to stay. But, with close and frequent inspections from our trimmers and irrigator, our desertscape will look better with the passing of time.

As I look ahead at my 4th and last year as your Landscape Director, my duties will decrease while new challenges surface. I will slowly coach Martha Nichols to serve as Landscape Co-Director with the goal of having her assume my current position in 2025.

Below are some of the projects the Committee and I will be working on in Q4 2024:

- The negotiation of our contract with O'Connell for 2025.
- The fertilization of rye grass – scheduled for the first week of November
- The take down (and potential replacement) of approximately 3 or 4 trees
- The replacement throughout all five phases of our desert scape upgrades of Lantanas, Firecrackers, Bougainvillea, and agaves (40 plants total). Note these are covered under warranty.
- Host our next Landscape Committee meeting in November 2025.

My gratitude to Randy Sawyer for entrusting me with this vital post and responsibilities back in 2021, and to all of you for voting me in to the position. A big thank you to Steve Bell for being my eyes and ears and his expert guidance. And to Sue Green and all members of the Landscape Committee whose contributions to the desertscape upgrades were invaluable. I have learned from all of you and for that I'm grateful.

Cheerfully,

Rafael Cardona