

To Mesa Planning and Zoning:

My name is Jennifer Olson. I've worked as a landscape designer for the last 17 years after I graduated with my degree in Urban Horticulture in 2000. I have designed landscaping for new-builds and remodels alike. I also have worked as a consultant for homeowners who want to change out their current landscaping for a more environmentally friendly option.

I currently work for DesignSmart Landscaping, using plot plans and measurements to draw designs that are easy to read not only for the homeowners themselves, but also the HOA communities we work with. Together we work to create beautiful and functional landscaping to meet our clients' needs, and meet the various HOA guidelines.

I was asked to work on recreating a new design for the Villas at Alta Mesa. To take an account of every front yard, but more specifically the current trees in each yard. I have identified and catalogued the current landscape in each yard. I've viewed the original drawings that were made in 1998 and can see the changes that have been made over the years. There are many instances where large trees no longer exist. There are various reasons for this, but mostly I see the issue is the lack of space in which they were planted. When I insert trees into a drawing I generally make sure they are 5 to 6 feet away from any hard-scape; walls, driveways, lawn border, walkways, etc. Most HOA's even require me to make note of that on my drawings. There are spaces within the Villas where there is only 5 to 6 feet total ground for trees to be planted, and these are generally surrounded by hard-scape. It doesn't surprise me that these locations are the most common place for the loss of trees over the years.

I would not suggest replacing these large trees. They will only struggle. This makes it necessary to amend the city requirements that there be a large 24" box tree in each yard. Most of the locations can be replenished with a small tree, like the Evergreen Bird of Paradise (*Caesalpinia mexicana*). There are many of these throughout the community so they would blend in well with the current look. They can be installed from smaller 15 gal plants, are desert hardy, and will fill in the spaces in a couple of years. Although, some areas are so small, or have other plant material nearby, that I would suggest only a small plant or two be installed. In some cases nothing should be planted because the area is being used for garbage pathways to the street.

As I worked to draw a new landscape design for the Villas at Alta Mesa I noted the current landscaping in each front yard. I walked the property in May of this year and took many pictures of the missing trees, and the issues that have occurred in those locations. It is a beautiful community and we want to maintain the current look without adding more problems for future residents.

Thank you for your time,

Jennifer Olson