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MEMPHIS NEEDS FIX FOR DEAD TREES AT AIRPORT

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MEMPHIS, Tenn. (AP) — Officials are set to discuss options to replace dead landscaping at the doorstep of Memphis International Airport.

The Commercial Appeal (<http://bit.ly/10D4PTB>) reports a plan to replace hundreds of dead trees and shrubs is expected this week at Memphis City Hall.

The landscaping project was installed at the airport in 2011 — a joint effort of the Greater Memphis Chamber Aerotropolis committee and the Memphis Airport Area Development Corp. The city government then took over the project and appropriated \$1.6 million for it.

Now, nearly 10 percent of everything that was planted is dead, including 300 trees, and the M-shaped raised planter that welcomes visitors is empty. The condition of the landscaping project is being blamed on a "multitude of mistakes."

Julie Ellis, a Butler Snow attorney working with the Greater Memphis Chamber Aerotropolis committee briefed City Council members this month on the project.

"We can't start something like this at the front door of our city and not finish it," Ellis said. "Time is of the essence. Mother Nature is out there continuing her work and it's going to be very clear that (the plants) are dead and not dormant."

City engineering director John Cameron said airport and city officials wanted as many trees planted as possible before an airport conference, "which, unfortunately, resulted in many trees being placed right before the warm, dry season that occurs in the summer in Memphis."

He said other issues pushed the plantings back two months and a "lot of damage was done at that point to the project."

Cameron said it would cost up to \$153,000 to restore the landscaping project to its original state.

After deciding that the city would be the lead agency on such a project, council member Harold Collins said he would bring back a plan for a council committee to review this week.

Council member Shea Flinn said he's not sure if taxpayers need to pay for the entire effort.

"It seems like there's been a multitude of mistakes and there's a multitude of places to point fingers on this," Flinn said. "The Chamber, the city or the airport, among all of them there's blame to go around on all of that. If we're talking about \$153,000, that might need to split up three ways."

Information from: The Commercial Appeal, <http://www.commercialappeal.com>

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