



Bill Lovejoy/Sentinel photos

A palm tree is hoisted from the corner of Pacific and Cathcart avenues on its way to be replanted at Mission Plaza park on Thursday morning.

Big date palms relocate across town

Urban forester moves two 50-year-old palms, replants them in Mission Plaza

By **DAN WHITE**
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Tree lovers shouldn't fret about the fact that two enormous date palm trees vanished Thursday from the corner of Pacific and Cathcart avenues.

They are alive and in good hands. But you'll have to go clear across town to see them again.

On Thursday, a 10-man work crew, under the guidance of the city's urban forester, Leslie Keedy, used a crane to lift the 45-foot-tall, 50-year-old trees, set them on a flatbed truck and drove them to Mission Plaza park, where they were replanted. Lewis Tree handled the replanting.

The two trees had swayed over the Pacific Avenue intersection since 1982, said Doug Weaver, senior book seller at Gateways Books, which was located at Cathcart and Pacific before moving to North Pacific Avenue earlier this year. The former Gateway site is slated for development.

The workers looked like ants pushing a pencil as they helped set the trees on the flatbed, which was not quite long enough for them. As the crew drove them to their new home, the date palms' fronts slapped against the asphalt.

It cost \$5,000 to move the trees, and that

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JIM GIBBONS, FIELD CREW LEADER

included rental of a 50-ton crane. But the city isn't footing the bill. Pacific Union Commercial Development, which is putting a housing project on the former Gateway site, was required to pay for the palm relocation as a condition of its building permit.

"We've got these 11,000-pound palm trees and we're dragging them 'round town," field crew leader Jim Gibbons said.

The date palms, worth between \$5,000 and \$10,000 each, have some protection under the city's heritage tree ordinance.

Trees with a girth of more than 14 inches cannot be relocated, or be pruned to 25 percent or more of its size within a three-year period unless the owner gets permission from the city.

A police escort, and four city vehicles, accompanied the trees as they were trucked to their new home.

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One of the smaller trees accompanying the larger date palms moved to Mission Plaza park on Thursday is hoisted onto a truck.