

City Tree Removal Policy - *DRAFT*

GENERAL

It is the objective of the City of Longview to provide a tree planting program on City property that insures the future existence of the City's tree resource. The goal to grow the urban forest is done so by the planting of as many or more trees than must be removed. Park and street trees are an asset to the community, it is inevitable that they mature and require care, maintenance, and eventually replacement. To manage a sustainable urban forest, a methodology must be in place to direct the City as to when trees need to be removed, when it is necessary to replace them, and how to prolong the longevity of an urban forest as a whole, through reforestation with young, diverse, and appropriately located tree species. Care and maintenance, in addition to planting "the right tree in the right place," can help ensure that community trees not only contribute to the environmental and economic vitality of the area, but also reduce the potential hazards to public safety.

TREE REMOVAL PROCESS

A homeowner may request a tree removal from the Parks Department by submitting a "Tree Removal Request Form". The homeowner must indicate which of the tree removal criteria they feel their tree meets. The Parks Manager or Lead Arborist will evaluate the tree against the tree removal criteria stated within the policy. The City employs at least two International Society of Arboriculture (ISA) Certified Arborists that verifies they have the knowledge in areas such as tree biology, diagnosis, maintenance practices, safety, and other tree care applications. The City also employs a sonic tomography device that helps accurately inspect the safety of the tree, helps to assess the health, and enables the City to make better informed decisions. Once the evaluation has occurred, the homeowner will be contacted with an approval or denial to their request.

If approved, the removal will consist of the following steps:

1. Downing of the tree
2. Removal of the stump
3. Adding any required soil and grass seed to the old tree site.
4. Planting of a new tree adjacent to the old tree site. Should this not be possible due to the proximity to other existing trees or hardscape, or due to site distance problems, a replacement tree will be planted at another site on city property.
5. The homeowner is expected to water the tree as needed during the twelve months following its planting. The replacement tree species will be selected from the approved street tree list as designated in the tree management plan. The applicant may request a specific tree from this list, and the Parks Manager will grant the request if possible and if a specific species has not already be determined for the particular street. Planting of street trees only takes place from late fall to early spring therefore a delay from the time the tree is removed to the time a replacement tree is planted may occur.

DENIAL APPEAL PROCESS

If denied, the following steps are available to homeowners seeking an appeal:

Step 1

If a homeowner's request for removal is denied by the City of Longview Certified Arborist because it does not meet the criteria for removal, the first step in the appeal process is to bring a written appeal to the Tree

Board for review. The Tree Board will review the appeal as well as the evaluation report from the Parks Manager to make a determination for recommendation for removal or to move to the next step in the appeal process.

Step 2

If the Tree Board denies the appeal, the homeowner may request a second tree evaluation from a City approved list of outside organizations that employ a Certified Tree Risk Assessor on staff. The cost to hire the outside contractor will be at the sole expense of the homeowner. Once the homeowner has chosen from the approved list, City staff will coordinate the evaluation and are required to be on site during the secondary tree evaluation process.

The outside organization will submit a report to the City with their recommendation as to whether or not the tree meets the tree removal criteria. The City will review the report with the assessor to determine, as a first step, if tree care maintenance will resolve the issue and then only if necessary move forward with removal.

Step 3

If the homeowner's request is denied due to the findings of the secondary tree evaluation, the homeowner may bring their appeal to City Council for final review and recommendation.

TREE REMOVAL CRITERIA

City Trees may be removed only when one or more of the following criteria are met:

1. Dead or Infected

The tree is dead or infected with an epidemic insect or disease that could cause the demise of the tree and where no known control is available and removal is the recommended practice to prevent transmission.

2. Severe Safety Hazard

The tree poses a severe safety hazard, including a visual traffic hazard, or is causing structural damage to public or private property that cannot be corrected by pruning, hardscape grinding, transplanting or other hazard removal treatments.

3. Growth Inhibitor

The tree severely interferes with the growth and development of a more desirable tree.

4. Low Aesthetic Value

The aesthetic value of the tree is so low or negative that the site is visually enhanced by the tree's removal.

5. Work Site Improvements

Work improvements required to be made around the tree will kill or render it a hazard.

6. Birch Tree Removal and Replacement Request

* See Birch Tree Removal and Replacement Policy