

## **Resident Questions from the Virginia Park Neighborhood Meeting- June 29, 2009**

### **Can trees be removed or cut in historic districts without permission by Historic District Commission (HDC)?**

From Jill Thacher, Historic District Preservation Coordinator:

Landmark trees on private property in the historic district must be reviewed by the HDC, or by staff on behalf of the HDC, before removal. Trees in the city street right-of-way are not reviewed by the HDC.

### **Does city target certain species for removal?**

No, the City is not targeting certain species for removal.

The genus Acer (Maple) makes up 40.93% of the street tree population and 37.55% of the total tree population (including trees in mowed areas of parks). With the large proportion of this genus and the fact that they also make up 54% of the street trees that have a diameter (DBH) of 19" or greater, the care of this aging Acer (Maple) population may lead to the appearance that they are being targeted. However, we are **not** targeting them for systematic tree removal and are looking for ways to help improve their health and prolong their lives.

### **What is relationship between Systems Planning and Field Operations?**

Systems Planning is a multi-disciplinary unit with responsibility for asset management planning for the city. The Systems Planning Unit is committed to long-range and strategic planning and coordination of constructed and natural infrastructure systems, to be achieved through customer engagement and the development of environmentally sustainable practices.

Field Operations is responsible for conducting the day to day operations and maintenance of city systems including Forestry, Parks Maintenance, Natural Area Preservation, Street Lighting, Signals, Signs, Radio Communications, Street Maintenance, Sidewalk Inspection, Street Leaf Collection, Solid Waste and Material Recovery activities, the Airport, and all Water, Wastewater, and Storm Water Distribution and Collection.

The two units work together to coordinate work activities and planning. In terms of Forestry Field Operations and Systems Planning, Kerry Gray (Urban Forestry and Natural Resources Planning Coordinator in Systems Planning) has

been working closely with the Forestry Field Operations Supervisor, Kay Sicheneder, as she learns how Forestry conducts its daily work activities. Ms. Gray has also been asked by Ms. Sicheneder and Field Operations staff to assist in evaluating trees in the field, when needed.

**What is our interim policy while plan is being developed?**

The City's interim plan while the urban forestry management plan is being developed is to utilize the newly completed street tree inventory to schedule work. The inventory identified maintenance needs (removals and trimming) according to a "Priority" system (1= highest priority, etc.). The Field Operations staff has a list of the Priority 1, 2 & 3 trees for removals and trimming and will be utilizing the list to identify work needs focusing on the highest Priority trees in need of removals first. The trees will be assessed by staff and marked with a bright green dot if removal is warranted.

The City will also continue to conduct field investigations that have been requested by citizens and schedule work, if necessary.

**Can we place inventory on the web?**

Yes. We are completing final checks of the inventory data. It is a "living" inventory and will constantly updated. We (city staff) are working with our Information Technology Unit to find a way to provide an updated form of the inventory. While we work on this, the Ann Arbor Chronicle has put the results of inventory on their website at <http://annarborchronicle.com/2009/07/01/city-and-residents-to-make-tree-policy/>

**Who has authority to place moratorium on removals?**

City Council

**Are trees the homeowners or do they belong to the whole city?**

The street trees are a community asset and do not belong to the homeowner whose house they are planted in front. However, the City does take into consideration the homeowners input when making a decision about a tree.

**Does contractor get paid by size of tree removed?**

No, when the City solicits bids for removals the bidder (potential contractor) is provided a list of the trees the City would like removed. The bidder then provides the City with a total price for the removals.

**Who did inventory? Are they the same group that trims trees on private property?**

The Davey Resource Group, a division of the Davey Tree Expert Company conducted the street tree inventory. This division conducts urban forestry and natural resource inventories and consulting services. The Davey Tree Expert Company does tree trimming and removals for municipalities, utility companies and homeowners.

**Are forestry crews ISA Certified Arborists?**

The Field Operations Supervisor, Kay Sicheneder, is an ISA Certified Arborists and has been once since 1992. Currently none of the field arborists are ISA Certified Arborists, but there are several that have expressed interest in the certification.

Kerry Gray, Urban Forestry and Natural Resource Planning Coordinator in Systems Planning is also an ISA Certified Arborist.

**Do we cable and brace trees?**

We do not cable and brace trees on City streets as was done in the past. Industry standards have changed with research showing that cables and hardware become ineffective and even damaging to trees if not installed properly and checked with regularity. Work standards produced by the American National Standards Institute (ANSI) are acceptable work procedures for tree work by regulatory agencies like OSHA and MIOSHA. ANSI A300, Part 3 details cabling hardware and procedure and calls for **yearly** inspection of the cable, hardware and point of attachment. This is a labor-intensive activity and the City does not have the staff or budget to annually inspect these trees, therefore the practice is not done.

**Did city have written tree policy?**

No. The City hired an Urban Forestry and Natural Resource Planning Coordinator (Kerry Gray) in March 2008 to coordinate (with input from residents and stakeholders) the development of the urban forestry management plan, policies and updating of ordinances. The first step in this process was to conduct a street and park tree inventory to better understand the resource we are trying to manage.

**Who do you contact about trees?**

If you have a concern regarding your street tree or any city-managed tree contact Field Operations Forestry at 734.794.6364 or a request can be entered on-line into the Citizen Request System at [www.a2gov.org](http://www.a2gov.org).

**Is Forestry policy addressed in A2D2?**

A2D2 is a zoning plan and forestry policy is not addressed in zoning documents. In the "Ann Arbor Downtown Plan" that was adopted on June 15, 2009, an action strategy related to street tree planting and ensuring long term survivability was put forward.

**Can trimming in a drought hurt trees?**

We are not aware of trees being damaged due to trimming during a drought.

**What information was collected during inventory?**

The tree inventory collected the following information:

Location: Address, Street, GPS coordinates (X and Y coordinates), cross streets

Species: Latin name, Common name and cultivar (if available)

Size: Height and Diameter at breast height (DBH))

Condition

Maintenance Needs

Presence of overhead Utilities

**Virginia Park trimming for movie seems like short-term gain comes with long term cost. What is our economic interest?**

The trimming of the London Planetrees (a.k.a. Sycamores) at Virginia Park consisted of branches two inches or less in diameter in the upper canopy of the tree. Trees are very well equipped to deal with the small cuts made during trimming. Rapid and hardy growth from the young stems left in the upper canopy will have the trees growing back together within a couple of seasons.

The City Parks system will receive approximately \$5,000 in rental revenue for the use of Virginia Park, the cracked basketball court will be replaced which is worth \$25,000 - \$50,000, and a donation will be made to the Parks and Recreation Scholarship Fund. All work done by city staff for the production of the movie is billed to the movie company Castle Rock.

### **How are trees marked? Decisions made?**

Trees are painted with a bright green dot when they are slated to be removed.

Field Operations Staff examine the tree while answering a series of questions including, but not limited to:

- What is the location?
- What species is it? Does the species have a history of failure?
- Are there large dead branches?
- Does the tree have cavities or rotten wood on trunk or major branches?
- Are mushrooms present at base, on trunk or branches?
- Cracks or splits in trunks or at branch attachments?
- Have branches recently fallen?
- Have the roots been damaged by construction activities?
- What is the size, shape and color of the leaves?
- How full is the canopy?
- Discussion with resident

Decisions are made using Field Operations staffs' education and experience. The lead arborists are seasoned workers who have been trained over years to help make the determination as to whether trees are removed or trimmed.

Are trees scheduled for removal? Can it be posted in advance on the web?

Utilizing the City's new street tree inventory the City has a list of priority removals. Field Operations Forestry staff are visiting each tree on the list to evaluate them and dotting them with a bright green dot if a removal is necessary. Once all the removals have been identified, we will compile a list and place it on the City's website. Residents along the street where a street tree will be removed will receive written notification.

Currently the City is looking to remove dead or nearly dead trees. Keep in mind, that there are a few thousand trees on the list and it will take time to do all of the removals.

### **Number of trees currently cabled?**

We do not currently know the number of trees in the City that are cabled or braced. This was not information collected during the tree inventory.

**Can citizens in the Virginia Park neighborhood form a volunteer group and get trees planted?**

Yes. Residents in the neighborhood interested in volunteering to plant trees should contact Kerry Gray, Urban Forestry and Natural Resource Planning Coordinator at 734.794.6430 x 43703 or [kgray@a2gov.org](mailto:kgray@a2gov.org)

**When will city start replanting in neighborhood? Want notice and schedule on the web.**

The City is planning on beginning replanting of the neighborhood in the fall of 2009. More information related to replanting the neighborhood will be available in the coming months.

## **Resident Comments from the Virginia Park Neighborhood Meeting- June 29, 2009**

Residents should help shape policy

Silver Maples and “invasives” should not be removed if healthy

Need citizen involvement to protect urban forest

Citizen group to help shape policy needed

Don't look at past but instead at existing policy and what changes are needed

Policy on paper doesn't match current practice

Need planning for trees like other city assets and green practices

Worry about calling city to trim tree for fear of removal

Concerned can't plant shade tree on 4 foot extension

More taxpayer money to go for trees

Lack of transparency.

City council need to recognize importance of this beautiful resource, trees.

Need a team of arborists to decide fate of trees.

Need better communication.

Need street cleaning and coordination with neighbors

Need proper notification

Trees that are heavily trimmed die faster

City shouldn't be run by consultants- use volunteers- lots of retired experts in the area.

Take concept of "streetscape" to city-wide planning effort

Questioning the accuracy of the inventory

Problem getting good quality service from the city.

Need to improve information management

Share inventory results, even if in excel spreadsheet.

"Fair" should NOT be used as criteria for removal. It is 70% of street tree inventory!

If citizen requests removal- concern for litigation drives decision making.

Policy on lawn extension width and tree planting

Decision to cut down trees is a complex process.