

# **CITY OF UKIAH**

## **TREE MANAGEMENT GUIDELINES**

TREE MANAGEMENT POLICIES FOR THE  
PROTECTION, OPERATION AND MAINTENANCE OF  
UKIAH'S URBAN FOREST



Adopted December 1, 2010  
Revised November 19, 2014  
Revised March 19, 2023

# TREE MANAGEMENT GUIDELINES AND POLICIES FOR THE OPERATION AND MAINTENANCE OF CITY PROPERTY

## **1.0 PURPOSE STATEMENT**

The purpose of this document is to provide policy guidelines for the preservation, maintenance and enhancement of the urban forest in parks and other areas maintained by the staff and contractors of the City of Ukiah.

*If the urban forest is the sum of all woody and associated vegetation, then urban forest management is the establishment of the care of this resource."*

Urban Forestry; Planning and Managing Urban Greenscapes

## **2.0 DEPARTMENTS AFFECTED**

- 2.1 Community Services Department
- 2.2 Public Works Department
- 2.3 Electric Utility Department
- 2.4 Planning and Community Development Department

## **3.0 RESPONSIBILITY**

The department directors shall be responsible for the implementation of these policies and guidelines and all staff shall be trained and shall abide by these guidelines and policies as outlined in this document. City Council shall approve any significant amendments or changes to the *Tree Management Guidelines and Policies* proposed by staff and community partners before they are adopted.

**3.1** The Director of Community Services will oversee and have authority over the implementation of this plan. The Directors of the affected departments are responsible for the preservation, care and maintenance of trees as follows:

- 3.1.1 Community Services Department is responsible for all trees in public parks and will supervise and have authority over the trimming and maintenance of all trees
- 3.1.2 Public Works Department is responsible for all trees in the public right of way and creeks. For all non-emergent trimming, prior review and approval from the Director of Community Services or designee is required.
- 3.1.3 Electric Utility Department is responsible for trimming of trees to maintain clearance from primary electric lines and facilities. For all non-emergent trimming, prior review and approval from Community Services is required.

**3.2** Planning and Community Development Department is responsible for oversight of all landscaping plans filed by the applicant. Planning staff shall routinely consult a city Horticulturist regarding street tree requirements.

**3.3** Inter Departmental Coordination: Inter Departmental meetings will be held a minimum of once per quarter and as necessary to facilitate communication.

3.1.4

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- 3.4 Partnerships:** Volunteers and/or community groups are important partners to achieve objectives for urban forestry.

## **4.0 TRAINING**

City staff shall receive training on all procedures listed in this document, including on-site classes and/or training prior to working on a tree trimming crew. Parks Department staff will organize and provide training. Documentation of training will be maintained by Human Resources. Staff who will perform tree trimming shall receive training at least once per year. City Horticulturists and designated Parks Department staff shall obtain additional training sufficient to maintain expertise and the ability to supervise tree-trimming staff.

Training for tree-trimming staff will include, but not be limited to: proper seasonal maintenance; best practices for soil conditioning; proper pruning techniques; and plant identification.

## **5.0 POLICY GOALS**

The Tree Management Guidelines focus on long-term protection of the City's trees and have been developed for the preservation, planting, care, removal or disposition of trees, replacement planting in parks, along streets and in other public areas.

The City of Ukiah intends that these guidelines and policies shall remain in effect, however, they will be subject to change based upon arboricultural standards, community input and staff recommendations. Suggestions for changes to the Guidelines must be submitted in writing to the Director of Community Services. They will then be discussed with community partners and staff and then submitted to the City Council for approval.

In addition to these Guidelines, Ukiah Municipal Code provides direction regarding tree care. Municipal Code requires staff to maintain a Master Tree List. Municipal Code #5422 states "a Master Tree List will be developed by the City Manager and shall be on file in the Public Works Department. The Master Tree List of the City shall remain in effect until supplanted by subsequent approved amendments or lists." In addition to the Master Tree List, the code requires a Master Tree Plan.

## **6.0 GUIDELINES FOR TREE CARE AND MAINTENANCE**

Staff and contracted professionals shall utilize International Society of Arboriculture's Best Management Practices (ISA BMP) and/or American National Standards Institute (ANSI). A Glossary of terms is included in Section 9.0.

Specific criteria as detailed in the ISA BMP shall be established and applied to for the removal and/or pruning of trees located in or on City property. The same criteria shall be used to evaluate the overall public benefit of the proposed work. In all cases, safety concerns shall receive priority. In addition, ***priority will be given to limiting removal, increasing forest canopy, and preserving appropriate vegetation and shade on city property and streets.***

- 6.1 Tree Preservation:** Tree preservation is arguably the single most important goal in maintaining the Urban Forest. A replacement tree requires decades of growth to achieve similar benefits of carbon sequestration, shade, habitat, and beauty. Additionally, there are a limited number of available sites for trees to be planted. If a root ball needs to be

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removed, the cost of replanting can be prohibitive. For all these reasons and more, every tree should be treated as a precious resource with all efforts made to protect whenever possible. Instances not specifically covered elsewhere in this policy include:

- 6.1.1 **Identification of Landmark Trees:** Landmark trees provide an excellent opportunity to educate the public about the importance of trees in general and the benefits and beauty of individual trees. Trees receiving this designation are considered unique because of size, species, historical significance. Refer to the Glossary of Terms.
- 6.1.2 **Conservation of Commemorative Tree Program;**
- 6.1.3 **Existing Trees:** Staff shall change use patterns in root zones whenever practical. For example: Vehicles parked or materials stored in the root zone shall be subject to an education and/or enforcement campaign to reverse the damage to the tree roots; pathways causing excessive compaction around tree roots shall be relocated if other options are deemed insufficient. Fencing, boulders, logs and landscaping are reasonable deterrents to reduce further damage and shall be used whenever practical. Refer to ISA BMP *Integrated Vegetation Management*.
- 6.1.4 **Special consideration shall be given for unique situations.** Every effort shall be made to protect trees growing near underground streams.
- 6.1.5 **Storm water flooding and sedimentation of drainage areas shall be properly considered before tree removal.**
- 6.1.6 **The relationship of vegetation to slope stability will be a primary consideration in all proposed vegetation management on slopes.**
- 6.1.7 **Diseased or Infested Plants That Pose Risk to Trees:** Action shall be taken to effectively decrease risk to other trees from pests and diseases. This may include removal and destruction of affected materials, pesticide treatments and/or alternative cultural practices. Other qualified experts shall be consulted as needed. Refer to ISA BMP *Integrated Pest Management*; *City of Ukiah Integrated Pest Management Plan*.
- 6.1.8 **Damage, Vandalism and Illegal Cutting:** Action shall be taken whenever possible to investigate and prosecute vandalism and illegal cutting of city-owned trees. Compensation for damages shall be sought based on the appraised value in accordance with The Guide for Plant Appraisal as authored by the Council of Tree and Landscape Appraisers.
- 6.2 Planting:** Planning before planting can ensure that the right tree is planted in the right location. Proper tree selection and placement prevents tree damage and costly maintenance like trimming. Consideration of water requirements and climate and surrounding infrastructure such as sidewalks, sewer lines and overhead/underground power lines shall improve the chances for optimum growth potential. Refer to the *City of Ukiah's Master Tree List*; *City of Ukiah Tree Planting and Maintenance Recommendations*; ISA BMP *Tree Planting*; and ISA BMP *Tree Support Systems*.
- 6.3 Root Environment and Tree Root Zones:** Refer to the Glossary of Terms. Whenever feasible, a pro-active program of cultural practices shall be implemented to maintain the health and vitality of City trees. Refer to ISA BMP *Tree and Shrub Fertilization*.

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### 6.3.1 Trees in parks, fields and all other areas both developed and undeveloped:

6.3.1.1 Soil Compaction: Every effort shall be made to avoid the compaction of soil in root zones and to encourage penetration of rainfall deep into the soil.

6.3.1.2 Mulch: Organic material such as mulch and leaves shall not be removed under the tree canopy.

6.3.1.3 Crews shall, when feasible and practical, establish and maintain the areas under tree canopies free of turf and invasive plant species. The use of native grasses and plants are encouraged, as are plants associated with the trees above them. Special consideration shall be given to oak trees and the use of drought tolerant plants near them.

6.3.1.4 Parking: Vehicles and equipment should be parked on paved areas, streets and parking lots.

6.3.1.5 Pavement: The use of pavement within park and garden areas shall be limited as much as possible, especially under tree canopies. Whenever pavement is necessary the use of permeable materials is preferred. Remove the affected curb and damaged or cracked pavement due to root uplift when feasible. Level the section with mulch, chips, sand, or gravel rather than replacing the area with impervious materials.

6.3.1.6 Leaf Blowers: The use of leaf blowers is discouraged. Leaf blowers should not be used to blow debris with native soil. Battery powered leaf blowers are preferred.

6.3.1.7 Pesticides: The use of pesticides is discouraged. Please refer to the City Integrated Pest Management policy.

6.3.1.8 Stakes: In the unusual situation when stakes are needed they should be driven in outside the root ball. ISA BMP Tree Support Systems shall be followed.

**6.4 Construction around Trees:** Protection devices shall be installed to protect the tree and root zones when near or within construction zones. The root system extends at least to the edge of the canopy or drip line of the tree with most of the fine feeder roots active in the top few inches of the soil. These roots need air to stay healthy in order to provide the tree with nutrients and water. This root zone shall be protected from compaction, changes in soil grade, digging, or other disturbances.

Protective fencing and warning signage will be required around the root zone. All tree protection devices shall be visible, well-anchored, and approved in the field by the Supervisor or designee prior to clearing, grading, or beginning of construction and shall remain in place and maintained until the project is completed. Refer to *ISA BMP Managing Trees During Construction* and *ANSI Construction Management and Standard*.

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- 6.5 Consultation with a Qualified Arboricultural Professional:** When planning and designing a public improvement project the City shall seek the appropriate qualified expert when the project involves or is near a tree or trees.
- 6.6 Pruning Standards:** The effects of Climate Change place an ever-increasing value on shade. Therefore, pruning shall be performed with a minimum removal of plant matter. The goal of pruning shall be to preserve the maximum amount of shade while allowing for the pruning goal. The latest pruning standards established by the International Society of Arboriculture shall be used in the maintenance of trees and are detailed in the ISA Best Maintenance Practice booklets. Refer to ISA BMP *Tree Pruning*; ISA BMP *Utility Pruning of Trees*. Such maintenance will include:
- 6.6.1 General pruning for clearance to prevent injuries and to facilitate maintenance and vehicle clearance.
  - 6.6.2 Pruning dead, dying, and diseased sections to improve the health and appearance of the tree and to prevent accidents.
  - 6.6.3 Pruning for clearance around lighting and overhead lines.
  - 6.6.4 Pruning back for authorized passage on service roads, walkways and paths.
  - 6.6.5 Pruning at the request of a private property owner shall only occur with prior approval of the Director of Community Services. Such requests do not obligate the City of Ukiah to prune trees, shrubs, and/or vegetation and should only be approved if there is an overriding and substantial benefit to the City  
It is the responsibility of the business owner to plan their signage so that visibility is not affected by growing trees.
  - 6.6.6 Pruning in park areas identified as places of illegal or inappropriate activity in order to improve general visibility, safety, and increased police surveillance.
- 6.7 Birds and Nesting:** Except in emergencies nesting birds or nests shall not be disturbed or harassed **by pruning or removal activities. To avoid nesting season, pruning, trimming, and tree removal shall only occur between September 1st and March 31<sup>st</sup> unless a qualified biologist, certified arborist. Or the Director of Community Services has assessed and approved the activity.** Fish and Game Code 3503: "It is unlawful to take, possess, or needlessly destroy the nest or eggs of any bird..." The Migratory Birds Treaty Act of 1918 also applies.
- 6.8 Unnecessary Wounding:** Prior to trimming a City Horticulturist will review tree trimming plans and consider the health and timing of trimming to ensure the tree will not be unnecessarily wounded. Because "topping" of trees can cause permanent damage by promoting decay, as well as unnatural, dense and weak branching structure, topping shall not be practiced or permitted except under special circumstances. Not only can a tree sustain wounds to the branches or top, it can also sustain wounds to the trunk. Therefore, these policies shall reinforce the protection of the trunk area from wounds associated with a lawn mower or other equipment.
- 6.9 Hazardous Tree Management:** Public health, safety and general welfare will be maintained through the use of generally accepted professional practices of evaluation

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and treatment to reduce risks to people and property from hazardous trees. Attention to proper selection, planting and maintenance of new trees shall also be pursued to achieve long-term risk reduction. Emergency corrective action can be undertaken without horticulturist review. However, crews who remove or trim a tree under emergency conditions shall notify and provide an after-action review to the horticulturist or Director of Community Services.

- 6.9.1 The City of Ukiah shall assess and manage the risk of tree failure within the limits of available fiscal and human resources. Priority shall be given to locations and situations with high probability of failure and high potential damage or injury that may result.
- 6.9.2 Notwithstanding an immediate hazard to safety and/or property, the City shall utilize a written tree risk assessment methodology established by the ISA ISA Basic Tree Risk Assessment Form or equivalent) to evaluate the likelihood that part or all of a tree will fail and cause damage. The components of the assessment shall include tree health, species profile, site factors, history of failures, tree defects/conditions, target assessment, risk categorization, mitigation options and recommend intervals when warranted.
- 6.9.3 Corrective action for high hazard rated trees shall be reasonable and prudent and may include:
  - Moving any at-risk structures, equipment, fixtures or recreational sites;
  - Correction of the defect by pruning, cabling and bracing, or tree removal;
  - Closure of the area

**7.0 Tree Removal:** The City shall provide 72 hours of advance notice of the intended tree or trees that shall be removed by posting a sign at the work site when feasible. The sign shall contain the reason for the removal of the tree and the appropriate city department's telephone number that the public may contact for further information. Tree removal will include:

- 7.0.1 Trees that pose substantial risk or hazard to the public, adjacent properties or to public facilities.
- 7.0.2 Dead, dying or diseased trees.
- 7.0.3 Removal from properties being improved or developed under an approved design, however, prior consideration to retention shall be given whenever possible. Preference is to retain existing healthy trees when designing any development rather than attempting mitigation.
- 7.0.4 Trees that block trails, drains or otherwise obstruct the use and function of infrastructure elements.
- 7.0.5 Trees on sites that were over planted by design or are crowded from natural competition. As the landscape grows, the Supervisor with consultation with a qualified expert shall selectively remove trees on a site to maintain spacing for optimal tree growth and function.
- 7.0.6 Removal requested by a private property owner shall only occur with prior written approval of the Director of Community Services. Such requests do not

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obligate the City of Ukiah to remove or allow removal of any trees, shrubs, and/or vegetation and should only be approved if there is an overriding and substantial benefit to the City

- 7.0.7 Consideration shall be given for providing trunk and limbs for service projects such as constructing benches and picnic tables. The use of wood chips for mulching material around trees and vegetation in the parks is encouraged.
- 7.0.8 Any person aggrieved or impacted by a decision to remove a tree may appeal the decision during the noticing period. A letter stating the reason(s) for the appeal must be submitted to the City Clerk's Office. An appeal automatically stops any action or non-action on the tree until the responsible Department Director has an opportunity to review and consider the appeal. The Director's decision on and appeal is the final administrative determination.

The Director's final determination may be appealed to the City Council. The appeal must be filed with the City Clerk's Office with 10 days of the Director's determination and must be accompanied by supporting documentation from a qualified arboricultural professional using the same tree risk assessment methodology established by the ISA as detailed on Section 6.9.2.

- 7.1 Tree Replacement:** At least one tree shall be planted for every tree that is removed from City property. Replacement tree species shall be selected so that overall mature canopy volume will be maintained or increased. It is preferable to plant the replacement tree in close proximity to the original tree's location. The replacement tree may be located elsewhere, if local conditions contributed to the previous tree's failure (See Section 6.2). New locations should be found on the same site or in the same neighborhood at a location of similar or greater value. Preference shall be given for planting native trees whenever feasible.
- 7.2 Replacement Plantings** The City shall undertake the task of replacement plantings to mitigate the effects of vegetation removal and to reestablish the landscape and increase overall mature forest canopy. The City shall determine the species of tree to be planted on City property and the planting location. Every effort shall be made to select a species compatible with the existing tree plantings on the street, (the neighborhood identity), the maturity of the trees, space available for growth, the presence of underground and overhead utility lines, utility poles, streetlights, driveway approaches and fire hydrants.
- 7.3 Phasing:** The City of Ukiah when appropriate shall consider a phased approach to vegetation management to reduce potential short-term negative aesthetic and/or wildlife habitat impacts (associated with such actions).
- 7.4 Wildlife and Habitat:** Trees and forested areas are recognized as important habitat for native wildlife and providing vital wildlife corridors. Trees, undeveloped landscapes and creeks will be managed to optimize them for wildlife habitat. Refer to the City of Ukiah Creeks Maintenance Policies and Procedures.

### **8.0 SUMMARY**

These guidelines are set in place to enhance the urban forest within the City of Ukiah. As industry standards change in regard to tree care, this document shall remain flexible to incorporate needed changes.



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## 9.0 **GLOSSARY OF TERMS**

For additional definitions, refer to the International Society of Arboriculture Best Management Practices

- 9.1 Commemorative Program Tree Program** provides an opportunity for the public in celebrating an event of memorializing a loved one by the planting of a young tree or tree while improving the appearance and canopy of City Parks. A tree or grove is purchased from the City of Ukiah to honor or memorialize an individual or group. Such tree(s) are identified and recorded by the City of Ukiah with the name of the species, dedicated individual or group and the name of the donor.
- 9.2 Developed landscape** is property that has been graded and/or planted, and contains plantings that are distinct from typical native forest. These active and/or passive recreational landscape areas are routinely maintained by park staff for public use. Developed landscapes shall include, but are not limited to: lawns, athletic fields, boulevards, golf courses including pitch and putt, lawn bowling greens, play areas, squares, places, triangles, and swimming beaches.
- 9.3 Hazardous Tree** is a tree that can be predicted to fail and has a high probability of striking people or property causing injury or damage.
- 9.4 Invasive exotic vegetation** consists of species of plants that are not native to our region and exhibit aggressive growth to the exclusion of native or planted landscapes and wildlife.
- 9.5 Landmark Trees.** Education is the primary goal of the landmark tree program. Landmark trees are individual trees that have been designated as unique because of size, historical/commemorative association, and distinct form, as an outstanding specimen or are important for wildlife habit. Landmark trees are provided extra protection via the Ukiah Municipal Code. These trees will be used as an educational tool highlighting the benefits of maintaining an urban forest.
- 9.6 Protected Trees** – Ukiah Municipal Code §9229.3 identifies trees that are protected within the boundaries of this code. Removal of a protected tree requires approval of a major exception.
- 9.6 Topping** is the removal of the terminal shoot of a tree to a stub or lateral branch that is not sufficiently large enough to assume a terminal role or cannot be expected to achieve wound closure to inhibit decay.
- 9.7 Tree Failure** is the breaking and falling of a tree or any substantial part of a tree. This does not include falling leaves or fruit.
- 9.8 Tree Root Zone** is the area from the trunk to the drip line or the edge of the unpruned canopy around a mature, uninjured tree or the anticipated root zone of a young tree.
- 9.9 Qualified Arboricultural Professional** is a tree care professional with a minimum of two years experience in the evaluation and care of trees in combination with a professional license or certification that measures minimum

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competency in relevant subjects, including protection of public health, safety and welfare. Acceptable titles include Certified Arborist, Registered Consulting Arborist, Registered Professional Forester, and Landscape Architect.

- 9.9 Undeveloped Landscape** is property that contains native or volunteer (self-propagated) plants and is not intended for recreational use except along designated trails. Undeveloped landscapes are (usually) not as intensively maintained as developed landscapes.

## **10.0 ADDITIONAL RESOURCES**

Additional City and other tree-related documents that incorporate tree guidelines are available electronically through the Intranet. The Department Directors shall provide the *The International Society of Arboriculture Best Management Practice* booklets, American National Standards Institute related documents, and Mendocino County ReLeaf materials to their employees.

These documents are:

- Municipal Code Chapter 5, Article 2, Number 5420 Street Tree Policy, Purpose and Intent (Ordinance 869, adopted 1987)
- Community Forest Management Plan
- Master Tree List
- Integrated Pest Management Plan, Community Service Department
- Creek Maintenance Policies & Procedures
- Ukiah 2040 General Plan; Environment and Sustainability Element (2022)
- International Society of Arboriculture Best Management Practices (ISA BMP): *Managing Trees During Construction; Tree Pruning; Integrated Pest Management; Tree Support Systems; Utility Pruning of Trees; Tree and Shrub Fertilization; Tree Planting; Tree Inventories; Integrated Vegetation Management*
- American National Standards Institute (ANSI): *Construction Management Standards*
- Mendocino County ReLeaf Tree Care Guide
- Hillside Ordinance 9135

## **11.0 REFERENCES**

Urban Forestry; Planning and Managing Urban Greenspaces 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition  
Robert W Miller, Richard J Hauer  
Les P. Werner ; W Saveland Press Inc, 2015

Oaks in the Urban Landscape; Selection, Care, Preservation  
Laurence R Costello, Bruce W. Hagen; Katherine S Jones  
University of California Natural Resources Publication 3518; 2011

Willits Urban Forest Management Plan  
Technical Assessment Prepared by Dudek 38 N Marengo Pasadena, CA 91101  
2021

Municipal Code Division 6 Safety; Chapter 5, Article 2, Number 5420-29 Street Tree Policy, Purpose and Intent (Ordinance 869, adopted 1987)

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Municipal Code Division 9 Planning and Development; Chapter 2 Zoning; Article 18 Zoning;  
#9229 Tree Preservation and Planting Requirements. 9229.1 – 9229.12 (Ord. 1139, §2 (Exh. A,  
10.070), adopted 2012)