



# WILDWOOD

July 16, 2019

The Honorable City Council  
City of Wildwood, Missouri  
16860 Main Street  
Wildwood, Missouri 63040

Re: **Policy regarding Replacement of Existing Street Trees (Wards – All)**

Council Members:

## **Background >>>**

During March and April of this year, the Administration and Public Works Committee (Admin/PW) of City Council held discussions on several topics relating to street trees and their use in the City of Wildwood. It is important to note that street trees were one (1) of the first actions of the new City, when it incorporated, to allow them again in public rights-of-way areas, given St. Louis County had prohibited their use due to concerns about damaging sidewalks. St. Louis County had drawn criticism for this change in its policy, when made, since many residential subdivisions in the 1970's and 1980's did have street trees and they added to the character and ambience of the project. Thereafter, St. Louis County required a tree be planted in the front yard of each new dwelling and lot, as close in proximity as possible. The issues with this approach are no County official could be assured the tree that was required was retained in the private yard area, after inspection, and, in some instances, which tree was the required street type, if more than one (1) tree was planted.

The City rejected this approach and noted the benefits of street trees to the community where they are located from an aesthetic standpoint, an environmental benefit, a cooling and shade offering, and a place for wildlife habitat as well. Street trees were required, as a component of the City's Subdivision Code, then Subdivision and Development Regulations. Thereafter, when the City's first Tree Preservation and Restoration Code was adopted in 1996, it included a Tree Manual that also required street trees and identified species and planting requirements as well. The allowance for street trees was well thought, intentional, and consistent with a community initially criticized by some as a group of 'tree huggers.'

The Planning and Parks Committee would also note the installation of street trees is an important component of the Town Center Streetscape Requirements and part of every residential and commercial project therein. These trees, in some instances, placed in grates, as part of the sidewalk system of Town Center Area, form part of the outdoor room intended to be created in combination with the building's architecture, public spaces, and the roadways themselves. These street trees have offered benefits and challenges in this environment, given some have not thrived as well as hoped in the grates and street environments.

Also, during many of the early residential projects the City inherited from St. Louis County, issues arose relative to retrofitting them with street trees, while also wanting to reduce grading that had been authorized in them by this previous jurisdiction. One (1) approach that was used was to allow a lesser right-of-way width for streets and, thereby, lessen the depth of the grading from the centerline of the roadway, when front setback distances were applied. The concept was to keep as much of the grading on the ridgeline and not push it down the slope of the associated valleys. This approach led to trees being placed in tree lawn areas that were not at optimum widths to protect sidewalk from root growth (tree lawn is the area between the front edge of the sidewalk and the curb of the street). This consequence was understood, but the City Council, the Planning and Zoning Commission, and the community agreed that root damage to the sidewalk would take many years and the trees were the priority.

The Planning and Parks Committee, along with the Department of Planning, are aware the optimum width of this tree lawn area was five (5) feet or more, but to protect mature trees at the back of planned lots, the accommodation was made. The root growth causes sidewalks to buckle up and creates a trip hazard for users. Oftentimes, when this situation arises, the sidewalks must be replaced, and the roots pruned according to standard practices. This process occurs regularly in Wildwood today.

### **Recent Actions of the City >>>**

As mentioned in the 'Background' of this Memorandum, the City Council recently changed several components of the 'City Street Tree Removal and Replacement Policy' and altered a key component of past actions regarding the same. The changes that were proposed are summarized below:

- Re-Planting - Street trees will be replaced only twice. The first replanting will be at the expense of the City. If the tree dies after replanting, a second replanting will be approved if the homeowner or HOA agrees to pay half the cost for the replacement tree.
- Size -New street trees shall be a minimum of 2 to 2.5-inch caliper at 6 inches above the root.
- Tree Lawn Width - Street trees will not be replanted where the tree lawn width is 3 feet or less.

Of these three (3) new additions to the policy, one (1) has created discussion among members of certain Homeowners Associations, where the City has required or planted trees in a three (3) foot wide tree lawn area in the past. These subdivisions have thriving street trees, but now when individual trees that form the pattern along the lot and associated street are removed for acceptable reasons, a gap will be formed and eventually these areas will have no street trees with the tree lawn areas, and, albeit, revert to the former St. Louis County policy on the same, which was rejected from the onset of the City.

### **Intent of Presentation at Tonight's Meeting >>>**

This component of the changes relating to the prohibition on planting in a three (3) foot wide tree lawn area needs to be reevaluated and changed in the Committee's opinion. The change would not alter the prohibition of the plantings of street trees in three (3) foot or less tree lawn areas in terms of width, but would accommodate the re-planting of them in existing situations, so as to maintain the required pattern, while still creating the kind of community the City has always sought for its residential subdivisions. This approach will address the concerns of the Homeowners Associations regarding the current appearance of the public streets that complement their investments in Wildwood that are significant in this regard. The vote of the Planning and Parks Committee on this matter was 6 to 0 in favor of the additional language.

The current policy component can be modified to read as follows:

*Tree Lawn Width – Street trees required, as part of any new residential subdivision, will not be replanted, where the tree lawn width is three (3) feet or less. Where street trees currently exist in three (3) foot or less tree lawn area, they will be replaced, subject to the components of the present policy regarding their replanting.*

In regards to changes of this nature, the members of the Planning and Parks Committee would note that, as part of any discussion regarding street trees and streetscape components of Town Center Area, the City must be cognizant of the “Tree City” requirements, which also stipulate the establishment of a Tree Advisory Board, which is the Planning and Zoning Commission. The changes that occurred earlier this year were not reviewed by the Planning and Zoning Commission, as the City’s Tree Advisory Board. Such was an oversight, but the Committee does want to make everyone aware of this requirement. At the request of the Planning and Parks Committee, the Department of Planning has attached the ordinance that created the Tree Advisory Board and the process that should be followed in this regard relative to changes to the requirements relating to trees.

**Summary and Conclusion >>>**

If any of the City Council Members should have any questions or comments regarding this information, please feel free to contact the Department of Planning and Parks at (636) 458-0440. A presentation is planned on this matter at tonight’s Work Session meeting. The Planning and Parks Committee appreciates the opportunity to present this information to the City Council on this important matter.

Respectfully submitted,  
**CITY OF WILDWOOD**

Debra Smith McCutchen, Chair\*  
Planning and Parks Committee

Cc: The Honorable James R. Bowlin, Mayor  
John A. Young, City Attorney  
Steve Cross, Co-Interim City Administrator  
Rick Brown, P.E. and P.T.O.E., Director of Public Works  
Kathy Arnett, Assistant Director of Planning and Parks  
Gary Crews, Superintendent of Parks and Recreation

\* The Department of Planning and Parks developed this report, in conjunction with the Planning and Parks Committee. Content reflects the Committee’s consideration of this subject and not necessarily an individual’s position or opinion.