



# STAFF REPORT

**MEETING DATE:** November 21, 2024

**TITLE:**

- 1) 1. Hold public hearing, consider, and act to amend section 6.3.004 PROTECTED & HERITAGE TREES to decrease the caliper per tree that will be protected from future development.**

This amendment seeks to increase protection of trees by reducing the caliper inch for when mitigation begins from 13 caliper inches.

- 2) 2. Hold public hearing, consider, and act to amend section 6.3.004 PROTECTED & HERITAGE TREES to add the requirement of a tree survey, add penalties, and further explanation of the requirements for tree protection.**

This amendment seeks to improve tree protections by adding requirements for a tree survey and also adding penalties when not followed.

- 3) 3. Hold public hearing, consider, and act to amend TABLE 2.1.003 PREFERRED PLANT LIST to add the Pecan Tree amongst others and remove some current trees.**

This amendment seeks to additional species to the existing plant list and remove some trees based on recommendations from the native plant society and independent arborists.

**AGENDA ITEM SUBMITTED BY:**

Submitted by: Kennedy Higgins, Senior Planner, Development Services Department

**BACKGROUND/HISTORY:**

The B3 code was adopted in November of 2019, and subsequently amended in April of 2022. From 2016 to 2023, Bastrop's population grew by approximately 34.3%. With the increased growth from Austin to the west, the availability of large land parcels, the availability of water, and abundant natural resources, the growth shows no signs of slowing.

***“The intent of the Code is to establish the Standards that enable, encourage, and ensure the community achieves:***

- ✓ ***Fiscal Sustainability***
- ✓ ***Geographically Sensitive Developments***

✓ **Perpetuation of Authentic Bastrop” pg. 11 – B3 Code**

While the aspirational ideas envisioned in the preamble of the B3 code (as noted above) to provide for fiscal sustainability, geographically sensitive developments, and perpetuation of Authentic Bastrop, several segments of the code accomplished just the opposite.

The B3 code removed several key factors to preserving the natural environment .

***“Retain its natural infrastructure and visual character derived from topography, woodlands, farmlands and waterways;.” Pg 12 -The B3 Code***

While that may be a lofty aspirational goal, without increased protections for the natural environment, the minimal tree standards and penalties for removal of trees in the B3 creates a situation where it is easier to cut down trees, than it is to save them.

The proposed amendments for Sections 6.3.004 Protected & Heritage Trees, and Table 2.1.003 Preferred Plant List (B3 Technical Manual), are proposed to rectify the original intent of the B3 code which allows for any tree not on the preferred plant list to be taken down without penalty.

**TABLE 2.1.003 PREFERRED PLANT LIST**

<b>Canopy</b>		<b>Accent</b>	<b>Grasses and Shrubs</b>
American Elm	Texas Hickory	Crape Myrtle	Anthony Waterer Spirea
Austrian Pine	Texas Red Oak	Deciduous Magnolia	Apache Plume
Bald Cypress	Western Soapberry	Eastern Red Cedar	Autumn Sage
Black Jack Oak		Eve’s Necklace	Dwarf Wax Myrtle
Bur Oak		Mexican Buckeye	Gray Santolina
Caddo Maple		Mexican Plum	Gulf Muhly
Cedar Elm		Red Bud	Indian Grass
Chinese Pistache		Smoke Tree	Inland Sea Oats
Chinquapin Oak		Vitex	Lindheimer Muhly
Lacebark Elm		Wichita Blue Juniper	Little Bluestem Grass
Live Oak			Little Bunny Fountain Grass
Loblolly Pine			Mexican Feather Grass
Magnolia			Rose Creek Abelia
Post Oak			Rosemary
Red Cedar			Seep Muhly
Shumard Red Oak			Texas Sage
Southern Magnolia			
Sweetgum			

Currently, mitigation for removal of a tree starts at 13 caliper inches, as long as the tree is on the preferred plant list. If it is not on the preferred plant list (see above), no mitigation is required. One important thing to note is that the Pecan tree (Texas state tree) is not on that list. State legislation allows Cities to begin mitigating at as low as 10 inches. This amendment to the B3 code will

ensure that more trees will either be protected, or there will be a fee in lieu of in order to cover the cost of a replacement tree.

Additionally, a tree survey is required for any tree on a property that is over 6 inches. There are not currently regulations around the tree survey. These amendments will add an expiration date to the tree survey, to ensure that an accurate and recent survey of the trees on site is provided. It will also add further requirements to ensure adequate protections. \*From the last meeting White Mulberry has been removed as it is invasive per the native plant society.

One recommendation from independent arborists is to use the Arbor Day Foundation Tree list. This list has many trees, but does also include some invasive species and trees that might not thrive here since it is not a Texas specific list.

The proposed amendment to the tree protections allows residents and visitors enjoy the natural environment and the trees that are so vital to the community.

**FISCAL IMPACT:**

None

**RECOMMENDATION:**

Recommend the amendments as proposed by staff.

**ATTACHMENTS:**

1. B3 Code Proposed Amendment in redline