



CITY COUNCIL WORKSHOP

CITY OF FAIR OAKS RANCH, TEXAS

AGENDA TOPIC: Tree Mitigation Options for the WWTP Phase 1 Expansion and Plant 5 Ground Storage Tank (GST) Projects

DATE: October 2, 2025

DEPARTMENT: Public Works

PRESENTED BY: Kelsey Delgado, Project Manager

INTRODUCTION/BACKGROUND:

The Wastewater Treatment Plant (WWTP) Phase 1 Expansion Project aims to improve the pumping capacity and upsize the conveyance pipelines from the wastewater treatment plant to the effluent storage ponds on the golf course. This project will construct a new pipeline through the existing sewer easement along Cibolo Creek which will impact existing trees in the area. As a result, a Tree Preservation Plan is necessary to outline mitigation requirements for Protected and Heritage Trees marked to be removed. Protected trees are defined as being 28 trunk circumference inches (9-inch diameter) or larger and Heritage trees being 75 trunk circumference inches (24-inch diameter) or larger.

As outlined in UDC Section 8.8, tree mitigation shall be at a 1:1 ratio for Tree Circumference (TC) inches to be removed. In cases where soil, slope, lot size, or other natural constraints make replacing the same number of Tree Circumference (TC) inches unfeasible, the City Manager (or designee), may allow some or all of the mitigation to take place on a separate, public site within the City, or on lands owned by an association that operates and maintains trails, open space, or parkland within the City. In addition, the City Manager (or designee) may allow mitigation by payment of a fee for some or all the trees to be removed, in accordance to the City's fee schedule.

The planting of mitigation trees within the existing utility easement may interfere with future maintenance requirements or cause damage to the underground sewer line. As a result, staff does not recommend replanting within the existing utility easement for this project. Additionally, due to the number of trees required to meet mitigation for the removal of both Heritage and Protected Trees, the City does not have enough public space to accommodate such plantings. For these reasons, staff has identified alternative options for meeting mitigation requirements:

Option #	Description	Estimated Cost
1	Pay Fee-In-Lieu of Mitigation	\$106,241.96 - \$123,834.36
2	Host Free Tree Giveaway	\$5,000
3	Exempt Project from Mitigation Requirements	N/A

Option 1: The costliest but fully compliant approach. A fee-in-lieu payment would be made from the project fund or the utility fund to the Tree Mitigation Fund, where it could support the oak wilt program, tree and landscape protection, City-approved events, or other designated projects with City Council approval.

Option 2: A Free Tree Giveaway program, allowing residents to plant trees on their own property. While this option would not achieve a 1:1 TC replacement ratio, it would meet mitigation requirements based on the number of trees. It also addresses the lack of available public planting space and provides a meaningful community benefit.

Option 3: As the project is city-led, the City could exempt itself from mitigation requirements. This option would eliminate the obligation to mitigate and remove any financial impact on the project budget.

Staff recommends Option 2, hosting a Free Tree Giveaway to meet mitigation requirements. One Heritage Tree (#1232) is marked for removal on the Fair Oaks Ranch Golf and Country Club property. To mitigate, eleven (11) 15-gallon trees would be provided to the Club for planting on the golf course. In addition, two Heritage Trees (#1298 and #1301) and nine (9) Protected Trees within the existing sewer easement are also marked for removal. Staff proposes to mitigate the removal of these trees by hosting a Free Tree Giveaway for Fair Oaks Ranch residents as part of the City's Arbor Day Celebration.

To meet mitigation, a total of 83 trees in 3-gallon and 15-gallon sizes will be available to our residents through the event, tentatively scheduled for November 7, 2025 (Texas Arbor Day), pending City Council approval. Should this option be selected, the giveaway will be combined with mitigation requirements from another City project - the Plant 5 Ground Storage Tank - which requires mitigation for four (4) Protected Trees. An additional 26 trees would be included, bringing the total number of trees available to 120.

While this approach does not achieve the 1:1 Tree Circumference (TC) replacement ratio, it fulfills mitigation requirements based on the total number of replacement trees. Trees that are 2.5-inch diameter are generally in containers larger than 30 gallons which typically are more expensive, require specialized equipment, and are difficult to transport and transplant. Free Tree Giveaways traditionally provide smaller trees, which residents can more easily transport and plant successfully. As a result, staff believes this option represents a reasonable compromise, balancing mitigation requirements, supporting a community-focused event, and respecting the budget for the WWTP Phase 1 Expansion Project and the Plant 5 GST Project

As part of this workshop, staff seeks direction from the City Council on the tree mitigation options as provided. Based on City Council's feedback, the selected option will be presented with the Tree Preservation Plan for City Council consideration at a future meeting.

POLICY ANALYSIS/BENEFIT(S) TO CITIZENS:

The WWTP Phase 1 Expansion is a utility improvement and is therefore exempt from preservation requirements. However, it must still comply with mitigation requirements. Tree replacement is not practical because the site lies within a sewer easement, and no public land is available for replanting. Staff recommends Option 2 because it enhances the urban tree canopy within the City, meets the intent of tree mitigation requirements and provides a meaningful community benefit.

LONGTERM FINANCIAL & BUDGETARY IMPACT:

A Free Tree Giveaway is estimated to cost \$5,000, shared between the WWTP Phase 1 Expansion Project and the Plant 5 GST Project. The split cost would be approximately \$3,905 for WWTP and \$1,095 for Plant 5 GST. Given the relatively low cost, no significant budget impact is anticipated for either project.