

ORDINANCE NO. 171, 2025
OF THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF FORT COLLINS
AMENDING ARTICLE 5, SECTION 10 OF THE LAND USE CODE OF THE CITY OF
FORT COLLINS FOR THE PURPOSE OF REQUIRING ADDITIONAL ENHANCED
TREE PROTECTION MEASURES DURING CONSTRUCTION

A. The Council adopted Rooted in Community, the Fort Collins Urban Forest Strategic Plan ("Plan"), in March of 2025. This Plan identifies seven future growth strategies to support and maximize the community benefits that arise from fostering a healthy, urban tree canopy. The Plan also addresses the current state of the urban forest, emphasizes why trees are an important component of our community's infrastructure, and identifies key opportunities to continue improving the urban tree canopy.

B. The City's Land Use Code encourages the establishment and preservation of trees when properties are developed. Unfortunately, there have been many occasions when a development commits to preserving existing trees onsite, but the trees are either not properly protected, or they are unintentionally damaged during construction.

C. Enhanced measures for tree protection during construction include: alignment with other protection provisions currently listed in the City's Land Use Code to support enforcement of tree protection standards; requiring the tree protection plan to be onsite and always adhered to; tree protection zone signage; updates to fencing placed at the driplines (outer edge of canopy) of trees; and, incorporating updated best management practices for trees during construction.

D. If a development commits to preserving existing trees onsite, these proposed tree protection measures will help set the preserved trees up for survival during construction and for longevity, providing long-term community benefits, to both the development site and the surrounding area.

E. This Ordinance amends Division 5.10 of the City's Land Use Code regarding Landscaping and Tree Protection to include enhanced measures to ensure the protection of trees during construction. This Code change supports previous and current Council Priorities and aligns with policy improvement opportunities identified through the Plan.

F. During a Work Session on August 26, 2025, Council provided input regarding this proposed update to the City's Land Use Code. On October 16, 2025, City staff sought a recommendation from the Planning & Zoning Commission to update the Land Use Code for the purpose of updating enhanced tree protection policies during construction.

G. The City Council has determined that it is in the best interest of the health, safety and welfare of the City and its residents that Article 5, Section 10 of the Land Use Code be updated, as set forth in this Ordinance.

In light of the foregoing recitals, which the Council hereby makes and adopts as determinations and findings, BE IT ORDAINED BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF FORT COLLINS that Section 5.10.1(G) of the Land Use Code is hereby amended to read as follows

5.10.1 LANDSCAPING AND TREE PROTECTION

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(G) Tree Protection During Construction. The following tree protection specifications shall be followed for all projects with protected existing trees. Any development activity that may cause injury to the existing trees set to be preserved shall be enforced as provided under Section 2.14.1.

- (1) Tree Protection Plan Must be Approved. The landscape plan must be submitted to, and the tree protection portion of the plan approved by Forestry or Zoning before any changes occur on the development site and shall be physically on site and always adhered to.
- (2) Before Site Work Can Occur. Tree protection methods identified in the landscape plan shall be delineated on the demolition plans, other development plans and permits and shall be submitted and erected prior to any site changes, including but not limited to, Demolition Permit, Stockpiling Permit, Asbestos abatement, Development Construction Permit, over lot grading or other site preparations.
- (3) No Disturbance. Within the drip line of any protected existing tree, there shall be no cut or fill over a four-inch depth unless a qualified arborist or forester has evaluated and approved the disturbance.
- (4) Pruning. All protected existing trees shall be pruned to the City of Fort Collins Forestry Division standards.
- (5) Protective Barriers. Prior to and during construction, barriers shall be erected around all protected existing trees with chain link or approved equivalent fencing a minimum of six (6) feet in height, secured or weighed to the ground, placed at the dripline of the tree no closer than six (6) feet from the trunk if the tree is surrounded by impervious surfaces. Concrete blankets, or equivalent padding material, wrapped around the tree trunk(s) is required to provide added and adequate protection during construction.
- (6) There shall be no placement, storage or movement of equipment, material, debris or fill within the Critical Root Zone or fenced tree protection zone.

- (7) Tree Protection Signage. All protective barriers shall be posted every 50 feet with a Tree Protection Zone sign approved by the City Forester.
- (8) Chemicals and Harmful Materials. During the construction stage of development, the applicant shall prevent the cleaning of equipment or material or the storage and disposal of waste material such as paints, oils, solvents, asphalt, concrete, motor oil or any other material harmful to the life of a tree within the drip line of any protected tree or group of trees.
- (9) No Attachments. No damaging attachment, wires, signs, or permits may be fastened to any protected tree.
- (10) Ribboning Off. Large property areas containing protected trees and separated from construction or land clearing areas, road rights-of-way and utility easements may be "ribboned off," rather than erecting protective fencing around each tree as required in Subsection (G)(3) above. This may be accomplished by placing metal t-post stakes a maximum of fifty (50) feet apart and tying ribbon or rope from stake-to-stake along the outside perimeters of such areas being protected.
- (11) Soil Disturbances. Soil disturbances in proximity to trees must comply with the distances in Table 5.10.1-(6) below, Tree Diameter to Soil Disturbance Distance. Soil disturbances include, but are not limited to, soil loosening or amending, augering or boring, tunnelling, irrigation installation, or excavation within the critical root zone (CRZ). CRZ is defined as the area of soil around a tree where the roots necessary for the tree's health and survival are located, extending one (1) foot for every inch of the tree's diameter measured at the Diameter at Standard Height (DSH), typically four and one-half (4½) feet about ground. Soil loosening and amending shall be pursuant to City Code Section 12-132.
- (12) Underground Facilities Installations. The installation of utilities, irrigation lines or any underground fixture requiring excavation deeper than six (6) inches shall be accomplished by boring under the root system of protected existing trees at a minimum depth of twenty-four (24) inches and not directly under the trunks of trees. Low pressure hydro excavation, air spading or hand digging are required to help reduce impact to the tree(s) root system when excavating at depths of twenty-four (24) inches or less. Refer to the CRZ diagram, Figure 5.10.1- (3), for root protection guidelines. The CRZ shall be incorporated into and shown on development plans for all existing trees to be preserved.

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- (13) Watering During Development. All existing trees within the plan must be watered using irrigation or hauled water sources throughout the duration of the development process and all development activities to sustain and improve tree health and survivability, under the following schedule: watered weekly at a minimum of forty (40) gallons per week March through October, and monthly at a minimum of forty (40) gallons per month November through April when temperatures are above forty degrees (40°).

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Introduced, considered favorably on first reading on October 21, 2025, and approved on second reading for final passage on November 3, 2025.

Mayor Pro Tem

ATTEST:

City Clerk

Effective Date: November 13, 2025
Approving Attorney: Stefanie Boster

Exhibit: None