

COUNCIL SUMMARY – TREE REMOVAL FEE STRUCTURE

Purpose:

To update the City's tree removal fee structure to better reflect actual arborist inspection costs, align mitigation fees with state law, and reinforce the City's policy of preserving tree canopy and discouraging unnecessary or excessive tree removal.

Background:

The City currently charges a nominal tree removal permit fee that does not reflect the cost of required arborist inspections. Additionally, discussions have highlighted the need for clearer, more defensible fee provisions when tree removal results in a lot falling below minimum tree requirements.

Proposed Changes:

- Establish inspection-based tree removal permit fees:
 - \$120 for removal of a dead or dying tree (one inspection to confirm health of remaining trees)
 - \$220 for removal of a tree that is not dead or dying (two inspections, one before and one after removal)
 - Permit fees are doubled if work begins prior to permit issuance just like all other permits, but exempted for emergency situations. We will always consider the health and safety of our citizens as the first priority.
- Eliminate waiver of permit fees, ensuring recovery of arborist inspection costs
- Establish a tree application fee, capped at \$500 per application, when tree removal causes a lot to fall below the minimum required tree count. Language in section 7.705 establishes waiver of an application fee if the lot satisfies the minimum.
- Maintain separation between permit fees (inspection cost recovery) and application fees

Fiscal Impact:

Permit fees are intended to recover the City's direct costs associated with arborist inspections. The application fee provides a mitigation compliance incentive.

Policy Considerations:

These changes support the City's long-standing policy of preserving tree canopy, discouraging clear-cutting, and encouraging thoughtful site planning, while maintaining reasonable regulatory flexibility for compliant property owners.