



Tree Board 2024 Annual Report

City of Lake Forest Park

Introduction

This report summarizes the work conducted by the Tree Board for calendar year 2024 as well as the current board term status.

- The Lake Forest Park Tree Board advises the City Council, with a primary responsibility for making policy and regulatory recommendations concerning the management of trees and forest canopy in Lake Forest Park.
- Additionally, the Tree Board holds the responsibility of providing outreach and education to the community on tree-related issues, including, but not limited to, organizing public events involving trees.

Tree Board Members during 2024*

Commissioner	Term Expires	Status
Doug Sprugel (^)	2/28/27	Active
Mark Phillips (^^)	2/28/26	Active
Richard Olmstead	2/28/26	Active
Stacey Spain	2/28/28	Active
Victoria Kutasz	2/28/28	Active
Richard Saunders	2/28/26	Active
Sandra LeVar		Resigned 1/2024
Marty Byrne		Resigned 1/2024

^ Chair; ^^ Vice Chair

* There is one vacant board position as of February, 2025.

Planning Staff & Council Liaison 2023

Staff Member	Title
Elizabeth Talavera	Assistant Planner (current)
Drue Epping	Urban Forest Planner (began March 2024)

City Council Liaison	Title
Larry Goldman	Councilmember

Work Plan Accomplishments

Advice to the Mayor and City Council on tree-related issues

Revisions to Tree Inventory (Urban Forest Ecosystem Services and Values Report)

The Urban Forest Ecosystem Services and Values Report (also known as the Tree Inventory or the iTree report) was submitted to the City in December 2023 and presented to the City Council by DCG/Watershed and Tree Board chair Doug Sprugel in February. However, a close look at the values in the report by Tree Board members revealed internal inconsistencies. DGC/Watershed was asked to review the report and found a data entry error that caused small errors (+/- 5%) in many numbers in the report. A corrected version of the report was received in May 2024. Since the changes did not significantly alter the text or conclusions of the report it was accepted without further Council action.

Changes to the General Tree List

The LFP General Tree List lists names and sizes of tree species that are automatically approved as replacements for trees that are removed under permit. The list of “approved” trees has not been revisited or updated for several years, and it contains four species that are now considered either Class C Noxious Weeds or Weeds of Concern by King County. In addition, the iTree report noted that several trees on the list are highly susceptible to emerging pests or pathogens and probably should be avoided. Finally, the Municipal Code (*16.14.030 Definitions*) states that the Tree List includes a list of tree species that are prohibited from being planted as replacement trees, but the current Tree List does not. Tree Board members Doug Sprugel, Richard Olmstead, and Mark Phillips met with Urban Forest Planner Drue Epping on several occasions to update the list and deal with these problems. The changes were approved by the Tree Board and are ready for Council consideration early in the new year.

Recommendations to revise the Lake Forest Park Tree Code

The Municipal Code recognizes a category of “exceptional” large trees that receive the highest level of protection during development planning. At the time the current statute was enacted few local data were available on tree sizes, but now data from the Tree Inventory make it possible to quantify what tree diameters can truly be considered “exceptional” in Lake Forest Park. Tree Board Chair Doug Sprugel and Urban Forest Planner Drue Epping met several times in the summer and fall to develop an appropriate set of diameters, taking into consideration not only tree biomass but also wildlife habitat and tree diversity. Early drafts of these diameter limits have been discussed by the Tree Board, and these discussions are ongoing. We hope to be able to make recommendations to the Council in the second quarter of 2025.

Comments on tree-related issues in the Comprehensive Plan

Guided by Community Development Director Mark Hofman, the Tree Board discussed the tree-related sections of the Comprehensive Plan and provided recommendations for updates and changes.

Public Outreach and Education on Trees

Outreach Events

Tree Board members led by Victoria Kutasz and Mark Phillips staffed information tables, distributing flyers and informational brochures and answering questions from the public, at the:

- Green Fair (Town Center Commons, March 30)
- Secret Garden Tour (Town Center Commons, June 30)
- Picnic in the Park (Pfingst Animal Acres, September 7)
- Community Climate Action Fair (Town Center Commons, October 20)

Materials Update

Tree Board members Victoria Kutasz and Stacey Spain updated the Board's handouts on the benefits of large trees, the role of the Urban Forest Planner, and Tree Board membership.

Climate Policy Advisory Team

Tree Board members Stacey Spain and Victoria Kutasz volunteered to represent the Tree Board on the Climate Policy Advisory Team and provided periodic updates to the Board on the Team's activities

Tree Planting and Maintenance Events

Arbor Day Ivy-out event

On April 27 the Tree Board led by Stacey Spain and Mark Phillips held an educational and practical Ivy-Out event at 19055 35th Ave NE. Board members described the steps in ivy removal, and with help from members of the Stewardship Foundation, ivy was removed from 10-15 trees. The Board intends to create an ivy removal video for inclusion on the LFP website during 2025 as a follow up to this activity.

Tree Planting

On November 30 Board members Dick Olmstead, Mark Phillips, and Doug Sprugel planted a pair of *Chionanthus virginicus* (white fringetree) saplings at the southeast corner of the Lake Forest Reservoir to replace trees that had died. Although the event was not widely publicized, several local residents stopped to watch and discuss tree-related issues.
