

City of Minneapolis

Request for Committee Action

To: Transportation & Public Works
Date: 9/13/2016
Referral: N/A
From: Public Works Department
Prepared by: Michael D. Kennedy, Director, TM&R
Presented by: Michael D. Kennedy, Director, TM&R
File type: Action
Subcategory: City Policies

Subject:

Update to Urban Forestry Policy

Description:

Adopting the updated 2016 Urban Forestry Policy.

Previous Actions:

[15-00917](#) - T&PW staff direction: Public Works staff directed to return to the Transportation and Public Works Committee no later than January 15, 2016, with a recommended policy to replace the 2004 Urban Forestry Policy, to be considered for adoption by the City Council and a report on best management practices for trees being incorporated into Construction Standards and Specifications. Staff further directed to seek the formal input of the Minneapolis Tree Advisory Commission, the Minneapolis Advisory Committee on People with Disabilities, and the Pedestrian Advisory Committee on the content of this policy.

[15-00137](#) - February 3, 2015 Transportation & Public Works Committee, Public Works and University of Minnesota Professor Gary Johnson presented the findings of a report summarizing tree failures and their relationship with sidewalk repair work. The report was received and filed, with the further staff direction “to continue to work with the Minneapolis Park & Recreation Board Forestry Division, the Minneapolis Tree Advisory Commission, and the Minneapolis Pedestrian Advisory Committee on recommendations for changes to City policy and practice that will limit the impacts to trees from City sidewalk repair work, and report back to the Transportation & Public Works Committee by July 31, 2015.”

February 27, 2004 – City Council adopted the Minneapolis Urban Forest Policy.

Ward/Address:

Not Applicable

Background/Analysis:

Based on the presentation in early 2015 by Minnesota Professor Gary Johnson regarding the findings of a report summarizing tree failures, the follow-up staff report and the staff direction in July, 2015, the updates to the Urban Forestry Plan are now ready for adoption.

Over the last year, Public Works staff have worked on the updates to the policy and met with the following groups to get their input on the changes:

- Public Works and MPRB/Forestry have collaborated to update the Policy, and move technical aspects to the Minneapolis Standard Specifications for Construction. The result is that the policy is now more of a guiding document, and does not need the same level of review and update as technical specifications change.

- MPRB Forestry created a new Division within the Minneapolis Standard Specifications for Construction that covers all aspects of as related to trees and current best management practices. The section, as part of the City construction specifications is reviewed and updated on an annual basis. Technical specifications are now in a single repository for developers, contractors, plan reviewers and construction and repair staff.
- Public Works has sought formal input with the following:
 - The Minneapolis Tree Advisory Commission (MTAC)
 - The Pedestrian Advisory Committee (PAC)
 - The Minneapolis Advisory Committee on People with Disabilities (MACPD)
- The MPRB Forestry Prevention Coordinator has been actively engaged with the Capital Project task Force regarding new projects, working regularly with the Sidewalk Inspections and their contractors to minimize the impacts from root cutting, and developing a database for cataloging work and results to further improve practices in the future.

The Urban Forestry Policy has not been updated since it was created in 2004. This update was prompted by the study by the University of Minnesota. The goal of updating the policy is to react to findings and recommendations of that study, modernize the policy, update it regarding current best management practices, and move and consolidate technical information into a single repository that is subject to more frequent review.

The advisory groups provided suggestions and input on the policy that were incorporated. It was a priority of the Minneapolis Tree Advisory Commission that the policy include best management practices, and follow the recommendation to create the Forestry Prevention Coordinator. It was a priority of the Pedestrian Advisory Committee that the policy include considerations of accessibility for pedestrians.

Highlights of updates to the 2004 Urban Forestry Policy include:

1. Added Section 2.2.2 that describes how the urban forest and tree roots should be considered as utilities, in the same context as underground water and sewer lines. This heightens their importance for care and consideration during planning, design, construction and maintenance, and shall be defined and governed as part of the standard specifications for construction. Simply put, the goal is to think about avoiding and disturbing roots as much as practicable, in the same way we want to avoid damaging pipes and conduits.
2. In Section 3, added the following: In response to recommendations of the MTAC and the University of Minnesota report “A Case Study of the June 21, 2013 Wind Loading Event in Minneapolis: Tree Failures and the Relationship to Pre-existing Site Conditions,” the MPRB Board of Commissioners created a new position called the Forestry Preservation Coordinator (FPC). The FPC serves to make tree related recommendations regarding construction practices, utility work, permitting, development review, and plan design for both Public Works and the MPRB. The FPC also serves as a field representative to mitigate impacts to trees for any construction and repair conflicts. The result is that there is a person whose first responsibility is to support tree health during design review, and construction activities.
3. In Section 3.1.1, referenced including that tree specifications and practices reference the current Public Right of Way Accessibility Guidelines (PROWAG), as recommended in the City’s 2009 Pedestrian Master Plan. This was a specific recommendation from the PAC, relative to pedestrian accessibility considerations when making sidewalk repairs due to tree root conflicts. If sidewalk grades are changed, these guidelines should be followed.
4. Rewrote Section 3.3 regarding tree grates to give clearer direction for dealing with tree root spaces in hardscapes. Tree grates may be used as long as appropriate accommodations are made for the root spaces. This was done to emphasize that it’s

- not tree grates that are the main problem in hardscape environments, it's providing appropriate root space that should be emphasized.
5. Provided references to how to find the Minneapolis Standard Specification for Construction. Designers are already asking for the new specifications now that they have been consolidated into the standard specifications.

Attachments:

Draft 2016 Urban Forestry Policy.

Financial Review:

No financial impact.