

TREE PRESERVATION

Sec. 18-339.-Purpose.

The purpose of this section is to preserve, protect, and enhance existing trees and mitigate the effects of tree removal within the City of Tomball. Trees, particularly native species, add natural beauty and distinct local character, add shade, promote water conservation, provide locations for habitat, and increase property values. The provisions of this section are intended to support the long-term viability of healthy trees and promote natural ecological, environmental, and aesthetic quality in the community.

Sec. 18-340.-Applicability.

The provisions of this section shall apply to all property within the city limits.

Sec. 18-341.-Exemptions.

Exemptions from the requirements of this section are as follows:

- (a) Trees that the Director of Community Development or their designee determine are dead, diseased, in severe decline, or deemed a safety hazard. The property owner or developer can elect to hire a certified Urban Forester, Landscape Architect, or Arborist to confirm or reverse the City's determination.
- (b) Trees within existing and proposed public rights-of-way, utility easements, and fire lanes.
- (c) Or as otherwise exempt under applicable law, including Section 212.905 of the Texas Local Government Code.

Sec. 18-342.-Appeals.

The City Council shall consider appeals if it determines that compliance with this section creates an undue hardship for the applicant. An applicant may submit an alternative plan or request relief from compliance as part of an appeal application.

Sec. 18-343.-Definitions.

Caliper inch. The diameter of the trunk of a tree as measured at twelve (12) inches above grade. This measurement method is used for replacement trees.

Diameter inch (diameter breast-height). The diameter of the trunk measured four-and-one-half feet (54 inches) above grade. This measurement method is used for mature trees during a tree survey.

Clear-cutting. The indiscriminate cutting, plowing, or grubbing of trees without regard to type or size for the purpose of clearing the land.

Critically alter. Uprooting, removing the canopy or severing the main trunk of a tree, or causing damage which may cause a tree to die. This includes but is not limited to the removal of a tree from a property, damage inflicted upon a tree by machinery, storage of materials or the compaction of soil above the root system of a tree, a change in the natural grade above the root system of a tree, or excessive pruning.

Drip line. An imaginary line extending from the external boundary of a tree's canopy to the ground.

Mitigation. The method by which trees are replaced is either through replanting on the subject property, planting or transplanting to another location or same property, or through payment of fees-in-lieu of replanting approved by the City.

Parcel of land. Land in the City of Tomball which has been platted or not platted.

Protective fencing. Chain link, silt fence, or other fencing used to protect preserved trees during construction activities.

Protected tree. Any tree species listed in the City of Tomball Tree List (Table 18-344.1) that measures 18 diameter inches or larger. Species not listed in Table 18-344.1 do not require protection or replacement.

Tree, dead (or declining). A tree that is dead or in severe decline with substantial structural defects, no remedial options available, and no chance of recovery.

Tree, replacement. Trees planted to mitigate the loss of trees during development.

Tree fund. A City-administered fund established for collection of fees-in-lieu or replacement trees paid as mitigation and may include other contributions made in support of tree protection efforts.

Tree Survey. A plan or drawing to scale that identifies the exact size, location, condition (healthy, dead, or declining), and species of protected trees and the disposition of each protected tree during development. The plan shall indicate whether each protected tree is to be preserved or removed. The plan shall indicate the location and types of treatments to be utilized to protect trees during development such as fencing, mulching, root pruning, and other measures.

Sec. 18-344.-Protected tree species.

The requirements for tree replacement and mitigation as outlined in this section apply only to the trees listed in the City of Tomball Tree List (Table 18-344.1).

Table 18-344.1

City of Tomball Tree List	
American Elm	Overcup Oak
American Holly	Pecan
American Sycamore	Pin Oak
Aristocrat Pear	Possumhaw Holly
American Sweetgum	Redbud
Arizona Cypress	Red Maple
Bald Cypress	River Birch
Black Gum	Sawtooth Oak
Boxelder	Shumard Oak
Bradford Pear	Slippery Elm
Bur Oak	Southern Magnolia
Cedar	Southern Sugar Maple
Cedar Elm	Swamp Chestnut Oak
Eastern Black Walnut	Sweet Gum
Eastern Red Cedar	Sycamore
Green Ash	Texas Red Oak
Lacebark Elm	Tulip Tree
Laurel Oak	Tulip Tree Liriodendron
Leyland Cypress	Water Oak
Live Oak	White Ash
London Plane Tree	White Oak
Magnolia	Willow Oak

Sec. 18-345.-Tree removal permit.

- (a) Tree removal permit required. A tree removal permit is required for the removal of any protected tree within the City of Tomball.
- (b) Tree Removal Permit Application. A tree removal permit application and any associated permit application fees established by the City shall be submitted to the Community Development Department in conformance with the requirements of this section.
- (c) Approval. The Director of Community Development or their designee shall have the authority to issue a Tree Removal Permit if it complies with all the requirements of this Code.
- (d) Expiration. A Tree Removal Permit shall expire two years after its issuance.

Sec. 18-346.-Tree survey.

(a) Tree survey required.

At the discretion of the Director of Community Development or designee, a tree survey may be required prior to the removal of any protected trees. If required, the tree survey shall be performed by a certified Urban Forester, Landscape Architect, or Arborist. The submitted tree survey shall include the exact size, location, condition (healthy, dead, or declining), and species of each tree that measures 18 caliper inches or larger and is listed on the City of Tomball Tree List (Table 18-344.1). It is recommended that the tree survey includes trees on the City of Tomball Tree List that measure eight (8) caliper inches or larger to retain eligibility for preserved tree credits according to Section 18-349. – Tree Preservation Incentives and Chapter 50.

(b) Tree survey requirements.

The tree survey shall be submitted on a scaled drawing of the property which includes the following information:

- (1) A vicinity map locating the property within the community;
- (2) The boundaries of the property and its calculated area;
- (3) The location of all existing streets, drainage and utility easements that are on or adjacent to the property;
- (4) The location of any required buffer zones;
- (5) Include all protected trees 18-inch diameter or larger and all trees 8-inch diameter or larger that are listed on the City of Tomball Tree List that will be preserved for tree credits. Each protected tree that is individually located by the survey will need to be flagged with blue plastic flagging. The tree survey submittals must include a table cross referenced to the diagram with the identification number, species, and diameter; and
- (6) Location of tree protection fencing installed at the edge of the drip line.

(c) Alternatives to a tree survey.

- (1) No Protected Trees on Site. In lieu of a tree survey, the applicant may submit an affidavit from a certified Urban Forester, Landscape Architect, or Arborist certifying that there are no protected trees on the property or all protected trees on the property are entirely dead or in severe decline. The affidavit shall be approved by the Director of Community Development or their designee to be accepted as an alternative to the required tree survey.

- (2) Preservation areas. In lieu of a tree survey, the applicant may submit a landscape plan together with the plat submittal or a tree removal permit depicting no-disturbance preservation areas that include substantial existing tree canopy coverage that will not be disturbed or critically altered during grading or construction, with the following conditions:
- (a) The no-disturbance preservation areas shall constitute a minimum of 20% of the parcel area.
 - (b) To confirm the existence of substantial existing tree canopy coverage in the designated areas, the submittal shall include aerial photographs and on-site photos.
 - (c) Trees within the designated areas do not need to be identified as a protected tree species.

Sec. 18-347.-Buffer zones.

For plats submitted after the effective date of this provision that are adjacent to existing properties zoned for residential uses that are not part of the new subdivision, a buffer zone is required in the new subdivision along the common boundary between the new subdivision and the existing residential zone. The buffer zone shall be established as a platted reserve restricted exclusively for trees and landscaping, being a strip not less than 18 feet deep running parallel and adjacent to the common boundary and not less than 15 feet deep behind the back line of any easement or series of abutting parallel easements along the common boundary. Outside of any existing or proposed easement within the buffer zone, all trees and underbrush within this buffer zone, if they exist, are subject to mandatory preservation.

Exemptions from the buffer zone requirements include:

- (a) Subdivisions that are less than five acres in size; and
- (b) Replats of existing subdivisions where the boundary between the subdivision being replatted and the existing residential zone is unchanged and where additional lots are not being created along the boundary.

Sec. 18-348.-Tree Replacement Standards

- (a) Mitigation of Removed Trees. Protected trees meeting the minimum size and species requirements shall be replaced at a rate of 1 inch caliper of new trees for every 1-inch diameter of protected trees removed. The total number of caliper inches required to be mitigated shall not exceed 100 caliper inches per acre.
- (b) Replacement Tree Size. All replacement trees required per the mitigation ratio shall be a minimum of four (4) caliper inches. Trees must be a species listed in City of Tomball Tree List (Table 18-344.1).

(c) Landscape Credit. Replacement trees that are planted on site as mitigation for removal of protected trees are eligible to be counted toward the landscaping requirements of Chapter 50.

(d) Timing of Mitigation Compliance.

(1) Replacement trees shall be planted within 90 days of issuance of the tree removal permit. If the replacement trees cannot be planted within 90 days, the Director of Community Development or their designee may approve a delay in replacement of up to six months after the date of tree removal permit issuance.

(2) If an applicant cannot replace the mitigation trees required or gain approval to plant on an alternate site, a fee-in-lieu payment into the tree fund shall be required before the tree removal permit can be issued.

Sec. 18-349.-Tree Preservation Incentives

(a) Preserved Tree Credits. Trees listed in the City of Tomball Tree List (Table 18-344.1) that are preserved onsite and measure eight (8) diameter inches or greater may be credited toward the replacement trees required for mitigation or toward the landscape requirements in Chapter 50.

(b) Preserved tree credits will be granted according to the standards set out in Table 18-349.1.

Table 18-349.1

Preserved Tree Size (in diameter inches)	Credits Toward Replacement Tree Requirement (Mitigation)
8" – 11"	8 caliper inches
12" – 17"	12 caliper inches

(c) Code Conflicts. In certain cases, the preservation of protected trees may be desirable enough to take priority over full compliance of certain conflicting subdivision and zoning regulations, including, but not limited to, setbacks, lot design standards, building heights, sidewalks, lighting, signage, parking spaces, parking lot design, and driveway separation. When a conflict exists between the preservation of a protected tree and the provisions of subdivision or zoning ordinances, the applicant may request an alternative standard or design. The applicant's request may be considered and approved by the Director of Community Development or their designee, provided that a reasonable application of public health and safety standards are maintained with the proposed design.

Sec. 18-350.-Alternative Mitigation Methods

(a) Fee-in-Lieu payment. If replacement tree plantings cannot be fully accommodated on site with adequate space and conditions for long-term health, then an alternative fee-in-lieu payment to the Tree Mitigation Fund, which is hereby established, may be considered. If

the applicant can demonstrate every effort has been made to plant the required replacement trees on site, the Director of Community Development or their designee may consider a fee-in-lieu payment for the remaining balance of replacement tree value. Payments to the fund will be on a per caliper inch basis at a rate established in the City's Master Fee Schedule. Replacement trees and fee-in-lieu payments may be combined to satisfy the requirement.

- (b) Off-site mitigation. If replacement tree plantings cannot be fully accommodated on site, then replacement trees may be proposed to be planted in a location mutually agreed upon by the Director of Community Development or their designee and the applicant, including parks and other public places such as streets, medians, and other common open spaces.

Sec. 18-351.-Tree Mitigation and Enforcement Funds

- (a) The Director of Community Development or their designee shall establish a dedicated account to be known as the Tree Mitigation Fund.
 - (1) Mitigation fees paid as provided by Section 18-350 – Alternative Mitigation Methods of this article shall be recorded for the benefit of the fund and accounted for in a manner that distinguishes such funds from other general funds of the city. The balance of such fund remaining at the end of each fiscal year shall be appropriated as the beginning balance of the fund for the following fiscal year. The assets of the fund may be used as provided by this section, and for no other purpose.
 - (2) The assets of the fund shall be expended to purchase and plant new trees in public parks, parkways, medians and rights-of-way of public streets and upon the grounds of other public property of the city. Planting costs payable from the fund include the installation of related irrigation equipment and other measures necessary to protect and subsequent maintenance following planting. An amount not to exceed 20 percent of the fund balance at the beginning of each fiscal year may be expended to promote public awareness of the objectives of this article, including Earth Day, or Arbor Day programs for the distribution of sapling trees to the general public.
 - (3) The Director of Community Development or their designee shall establish a dedicated account to be known as the Tree Enforcement Fund.
 - (a) Penalties for violations paid shall be recorded for the benefit of the fund and accounted for in a manner that distinguishes such funds from other general funds of the City. The balance of such fund remaining at the end of each fiscal year shall be appropriated as the beginning balance of the fund for the following fiscal year. The assets of the fund may be used as provided by this section, and for no other purpose.
 - (b) The assets of the fund can be expended to hire or contract with a certified Urban Forester, Landscape Architect, or Arborist to help with enforcement, inspections and reviews as well as to promote public awareness of the

objectives of this article and may be used for necessary expenses, equipment, or contractual obligations related to the enforcement of this article.