

## **4.0 Protection of Trees During Construction**

### **Introduction**

The objective of this section is to reduce the negative affects of construction on trees to a less than significant level.

Land development is a complex process and is even more challenging when trees are involved. Construction is one of the greatest causes of tree decline and death in urban areas.

The long-term goal of the Forestry Division is urban forest sustainability. This describes the maintenance of social, recreational, ecological and economic functions of trees and their benefits over time. Stewardship of naturally occurring and planted trees is a central element in forest sustainability. Concerns about tree health and structure, preservation during development and redevelopment, species and site selection, quality of planting stock, standards of performance, maintenance practices in our parks, and recycling are integral to a sustainable urban forest.

Tree protection should not begin subsequent to construction. If preservation measures are delayed or ignored until construction begins, the trees may be destined to fail. Because in most cases construction affects to trees cannot be completely eliminated, the goal for our parks planners and designers is to keep injury to trees to a minimum and allow building projects to proceed at the same time.

Successful tree preservation occurs when designers, construction personnel, and project managers are committed to tree preservation. All members of the project team must be familiar with the rudimentary aspects of tree growth and development in order to understand the relationship between tree survival and construction practices. Myths about how trees grow.

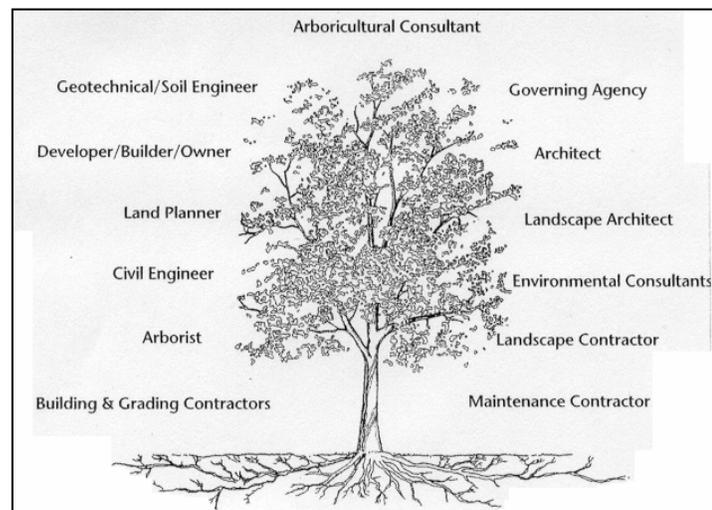
For example, above ground parts of trees is not a “mirror” of what lies below ground. In actuality, typically four to eleven large roots radiate from the base of a tree’s trunk. These “buttress” roots extend from the root crown and sometimes are visible when the trunk flares away from the root crown or collar. These large roots decrease in taper rapidly and branch repeatedly so that at distances of ten feet or more from the trunk they are about ½ inch in diameter or smaller.

These roots grow horizontally through the soil and depending on the tree can extend 40 feet or more beyond the branch tips. These smaller roots are primarily responsible for water and mineral absorption. There can be hundreds of roots in a cubic inch of soil— thus any removal of soil or root severance forces a tree to compromise its physiological processes to sustain the loss.

All trees cannot and should not be preserved. Trees that are structurally unstable, in poor health, or unable to survive effects of construction become a liability to the project and should be removed. A realistic tree preservation program acknowledges that conflicts between trees and development may sometimes result in the removal of some

trees and recognizes the detrimental effect to the project and community when trees die after construction is completed.

Successful tree preservation occurs when construction impacts to trees are minimized or avoided altogether. The challenge is to determine when impacts will be too severe for the tree to survive, not only in the short term, but also in the long term. There are no quantitative methods to calculate this critical level. Determining the optimum tree protection zone provides a guideline, although trees often survive and flourish with smaller protection areas.



Matheny, N.P. and Clark, J.R. 1998. *Trees and Development*

***Tree Preservation during development requires the commitment of everyone involved in the project's planning, design, construction, and management.***

The following are the three guiding principles for tree preservation:

- The acknowledgement that not all trees are in excellent health or have good structural stability.
- Tree preservation cannot be the responsibility of the Forestry staff alone. Each development participant must understand that his or her activities and decisions influence the success of tree preservation efforts.
- The ability of an arborist to cure construction injury is very limited, so the focus of preservation efforts is the *prevention* of damage.

Following the above principles will increase the chance for success and reduce the possibility that trees will die.

Efforts at preservation must include acknowledgement of the tree and its ecological support system.

#### **4.10 Planning for All Projects**

Capital improvement projects, in-house construction projects, sport field renovations, and even the addition of a few sprinkler lines affect trees. Our department considers trees as important assets and requires plotting tree locations on plans for all projects.

##### **4.10.1 Planning and Designing for Capital Improvement Projects**

Projects are designed by in-house design staff and by outside design firms. Either design team should be given set of guidelines defining the Department's *Tree Preservation Policy* (Appendix A) and *Tree Protection Guidelines* (Appendix G and Appendix I), to assure that trees are accounted for from project initiation forward.

###### **A) Survey before Planning**

The survey must accurately plot the trunk locations within the project site. Include construction staging areas and delivery routes.

###### **B) Plan and Design with Knowledge of Trees**

The health and structural confirmation of the surveyed trees must be evaluated in order to anticipate how well they will respond to development. The evaluation must describe the character of trees and their suitability for preservation at a level of detail appropriate for the project and phase of planning. An arboricultural or forestry consultant must be obtained for this evaluation.

###### **C) Plan with a Vision**

Disruption of any tree by construction activities may negatively affect its physiological processes, and cause depletion of energy reserves and decline in vigor, often resulting in tree death. Typically this does not manifest until many years after the tree is disrupted. Preservation of mature trees during construction has limitless benefits to the success of a project.

When new trees are planted, consideration should be given to species diversity and appropriateness of location. To prevent destructive clearance pruning in future years, keep in mind the ultimate canopy and root spread.

###### **D) Plan for all Aspects and Entire Duration of Project**

Construction projects are multi-level and often require participation of various construction trades and subcontractors. It is important to plan for tree protection with an understanding of construction dynamics. Trees must be protected in the staging area, construction employee parking area, adjacent properties, as well as on the actual construction site.

##### **4.10.2 Managing In-House Construction Projects**

The in-house Construction team should be given set of guidelines that define the Department's *Tree Preservation Policy* (Appendix A) and *Tree Protection Guidelines* (Appendix G and Appendix I), and to assure that trees are accounted for from project initiation forward.

A) Survey before Planning

For all in-house projects, contact the Forestry Division for an accurate survey of trees on the job site.

B) Plan and Design with Knowledge of Trees

In order to better understand the condition of the affected trees, the Forestry Division will make available the results of the tree evaluation. This evaluation will provide you with knowledge of the resources and the anticipated construction tolerance of the affected trees.

C) Plan with a Vision

Obtain information about trees and minimize negative impacts on the urban forest. Conduct all projects with tree preservation in mind.

D) Plan for all Aspects and for the Entire Duration of the Project

Trees must be protected in the staging area, construction employee parking area, and during demolition and grading. Arrange with the Sr. Park Maintenance Supervisor for trees to be watered and for the soil to be protected from compaction.

#### **4.20 Pre-Construction Requirements - Tree protection and Preservation Plan**

Prior to the commencement of a development project, the R&P Project Manager, and/or City-Wide Construction Supervisor, and/or Regional Head must be assured that if any activity of the project is within the dripline of *Protected Trees*, a site specific tree protection plan is prepared. The following six steps shall be incorporated as part of the Tree Protection and Preservation Plan:

##### 4.20.1 Site Plan

For all projects, site plans must indicate accurately plotted trunk locations and *the dripline* areas of all trees or group of trees to be preserved within the development area. Additionally, for all *Protected Trees* the plans shall accurately show the trunk diameter, dripline and clearly identified *tree protection zones*. The type of protective fencing shall be specified and indicated with a bold dashed line.

##### 4.20.2 Protective tree fencing for all categories of *Protected Trees*

Fenced enclosures shall be erected around trees to be protected. This will achieve three primary goals, (1) to keep crowns and branching structure clear from contact by equipment, materials, and activities; (2) to preserve roots and soil condition in an intact and non-compacted state and; (3) to identify the *Tree Protection Zone* in which no soil disturbance is permitted and activities are restricted, unless otherwise approved by the DRP Arborist.

All trees to be preserved shall be protected with five to six (5 to 6) foot high chain link fences. Fences are to be mounted on two-inch galvanized iron posts, driven into the ground to a depth of at least two feet and at no more than ten-foot centers. Install a two-foot wide access gate for tree maintenance. Tree fences shall be erected before demolition, grading, or construction begins and remain until final inspection of the

project. The ‘Warning’ sign shall be prominently displayed on each protective fence. The sign shall be a minimum of 8.5 inches x 11 inches and clearly state the following:

***TREE PROTECTION ZONE***  
**This Fence Shall Not be Removed**

All work within the *Tree Protection Zone* requires approval of the DRP Arborist.

A) Type I Tree Protection Fence is for trees to be preserved throughout the duration of the project. The fences shall enclose the entire area under the canopy dripline or *Tree Protection Zone*, if specified by the DRP Arborist. If fencing must be located on paving or concrete that will not be demolished, an appropriate grade level concrete base may support the posts.

B) Type II Tree Protection Fence is for trees situated in small planting areas, where only the planting area is enclosed with the required chain link protective fencing. The walkways and traffic areas are left open to the public.

C) Type III Tree Protection Fence is for trees in small tree wells, building site planters or sidewalk planters. Trees shall be wrapped with 2 inches of orange plastic fencing from the ground to the first branch and overlaid with 2-inch thick wooden slats that are bound securely (slats shall not be allowed to dig into the bark). During installation of the plastic fencing, caution shall be used to avoid damaging branches. Major scaffold limbs may also require plastic fencing as directed by the DRP Arborist.

No storage of material, topsoil, vehicles, or equipment shall be permitted within the fenced area throughout the entire duration of the construction project.

#### 4.20.3 Verification of tree protection

The project contractor or construction supervisor shall verify in writing that all pre-construction tree preservation conditions have been met as follows:

- A) Tree fencing installed
- B) Erosion control secured
- C) Tree pruning completed
- D) Soil compaction preventive measures installed
- E) Tree maintenance schedule established

The Planning and Construction Project Manager, City-wide Construction Supervisor, or Region Head Superintendent and Head of Recreation and Parks Urban Forest must sign this verification.

#### 4.20.4 Pre-construction meeting

The DRP Arborist shall attend all pre-construction meetings to assure that everyone fully understands previously reviewed procedures and tree protective measures concerning the project site, staging areas, hauling routes, watering, contacts, etc.

#### 4.20.5 Tree Protection Zone

Each tree to be retained shall have a designated *Tree Protection Zone* identifying the area sufficiently large enough to protect it and its roots from disturbance. The *Tree Protection Zone* shall be shown on all site plans: Demolition, Grading, Irrigation, Electrical, Landscape, etc. Improvements or activities such as paving, utility and irrigation trenching including other ancillary activities shall occur outside the *Tree Protection Zone*, unless otherwise specified. The protection fence shall serve as the *Tree Protection Zone*.

##### **A) Activities prohibited within the *Tree Protection Zone* include:**

- Parking vehicles or equipment, storage of building materials, refuse, or excavated soils, or dumping poisonous material on or around trees and roots. Poisonous materials include, but are not limited to paint, petroleum products, concrete, stucco mix, dirty water or any material that may be harmful to tree health
- The use of tree trunks as a backstop, winch support, anchorage, as a temporary power pole, signpost or other similar function
- Cutting of tree roots by utility trenching, foundation digging, placement of curbs and trenches, or other miscellaneous excavations without prior approval of the DRP Arborist
- Soil disturbance or grade change
- Drainage changes

##### **B) Activities permitted or required within the *Tree Protective Zone* include:**

- **Mulch:** During construction, wood chips may be spread within the *Tree Protection Zone* to a four to six inch depth, leaving the trunk clear of mulch. This will aid in inadvertent soil compaction and moisture loss. Mulch shall be 2-inch unpainted, untreated shredded wood or approved material.
- **Root Buffer:** When areas under the tree canopy cannot be fenced, a temporary buffer is required and shall cover the root zone and remain in place at the specified thickness until the final grading stage. The protective buffer shall consist of shredded wood chips spread over the roots at a minimum of 6-inches in depth (keeping the trunk clear of chips), and layered by ¾-inch quarry gravel to stabilize the 3/4-inch plywood sheets laid on top. Steel plates can also be used.
- **Irrigation, Aeration, fertilization, Mycorrhizae** treatments or other beneficial practices that have been specifically approved for use within the *Tree Protection Zone*.

**C) Erosion Control:**

If a tree is adjacent to or in the immediate proximity to a grade slope of 8% (23 degrees) or more, approved erosion control or silt barriers shall be installed outside the Tree Protection Zone to prevent siltation and/or erosion within the zone.

**4.20.6 Tree Pruning and Removal**

Prior to construction, various trees may need to be pruned away from structures or proposed construction activity. **Construction or contractor personnel shall not attempt pruning.** Only personnel approved by the DRP Arborist can perform pruning operations.

Removal of trees adjacent to trees that are to remain requires a great amount of finesse. Only personnel approved by the DRP Arborist shall engage in tree removal. Removal of trees that extend into branches or roots of protected trees shall not be attempted by the demolition or construction crew, or by grading or other heavy equipment. Before removing tree stumps, the project manager shall determine if roots are entangled with trees that are to remain. If so, these stumps shall have their roots severed before extracting them.

**4.30 Activities During Construction and Demolition Near Trees**

Soil disturbance or other damaging activities within the Tree Protection Zone is prohibited unless approved by the DRP Arborist and mitigation for specific injuries is implemented. **No encroachment within 10 feet of a trunk will be permitted under any circumstances.**

**4.30.1 Soil Compaction**

Soil compaction is the largest single factor responsible for the decline of trees on construction sites. The degree of compaction depends on several factors: amount and type of pressure applied, presence and depth of surface organic litter, soil texture and structure, and soil moisture level.

The greatest increase in soil density occurs during the first few equipment passes over the soil, which underscores the importance of implementing protective measures before the project begins and equipment arrives at the site. To dispense traffic weight mulch and temporarily root buffers can be used.

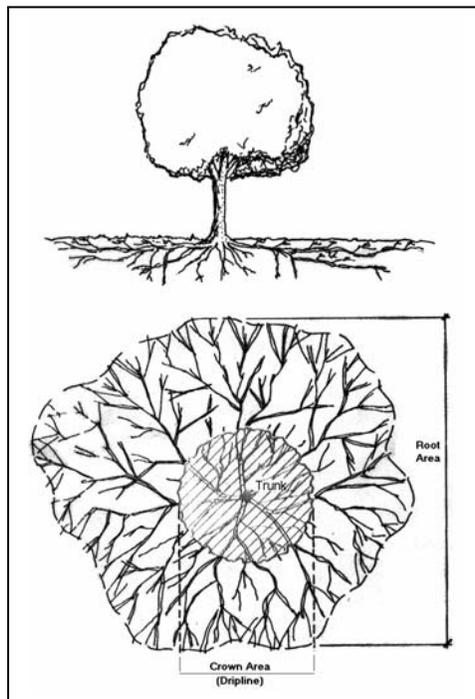
The following techniques can lessen compaction: vertical mulching, soil fracturing, core venting, and radial trenching. Do not compact soil to higher density than needed: to 95% Proctor density (moisture – density) in improved areas for asphalt or concrete pavements, and not to exceed 85% in unimproved open landscape areas that use water jet compaction.

**4.30.2 Grading Limitations within the Tree Protection Zone**

Lowering the grade around trees can have an immediate and long-term effect on trees. Typically, most roots are within the top 3 feet of soil, and most of the fine roots active in water and nutrient absorption are in the top 12 inches.

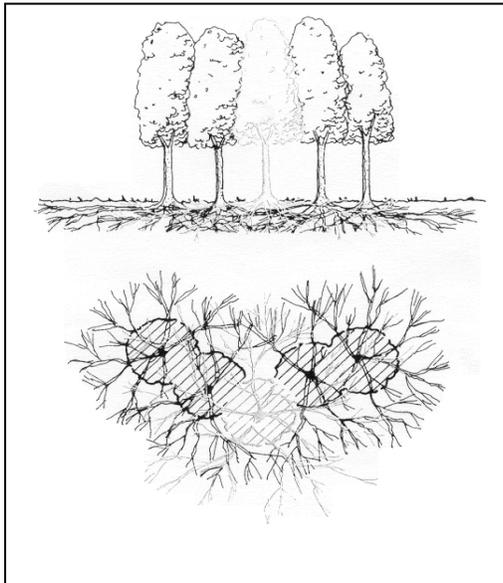
- A) Grade changes within the *Tree Protection Zone* are not permitted.
- B) Grade changes outside the *Tree Protection Zone* shall not significantly alter drainage.
- C) Grade changes under specifically approved circumstances shall not allow more than 6 inches of fill soil or allow more than 4 inches of existing soil to be removed from natural grade, unless mitigated.
- D) Grade fills over 6 inches or impervious overlay shall incorporate an approved permanent aeration system, permeable material, or other approved mitigation.
- E) Grade cuts exceeding 4 inches shall incorporate retaining walls or an appropriate transition equivalent.

The pictures on the next pages illustrate the pattern of tree root development and areas where encroachments may have an adverse effect on tree health. See Training Leaflets (Appendix P) for a list of information offered by the Forestry Division. The video, *Guide for Excavating Near Trees, Tunneling and Trenching* (International Society of Arboriculture) can be borrowed from the Forestry Office.



Matheny, N.P. and Clark, J.R. 1998. *Trees and Development*

***Tree root system of a tree can be described as shallow and widespread, extending far beyond the edge of the canopy.***



Matheny, N.P. and Clark, J.R. 1998. *Trees and Development*

***In many parks where trees grow closely together, root systems of individual trees overlap and intertwine, forming a dense mat of roots.***

#### 4.30.3 Trenching, Excavation and Equipment Use

Trenching, excavation or boring within the *Tree Protection Zone* shall be limited to activities approved by the DRP Arborist. Explore alternatives for trenching outside the root zone. Avoid exposing roots during hot, dry weather. Backfill trenches as soon as possible with soil and soak with water the same day. Small roots can die in 10 to 15 minutes and large roots may not survive an hour of exposure. If the trench must be left open all roots must be kept moist by wrapping them in peat moss and burlap.

If trenching is unavoidable, the following distances should be maintained:

TRUNK DIAMETER (measured at 4.5 feet above natural grade)	DISTANCE FROM BOTH SIDES OF THE TRUNK
Up to 6 inches	Past dripline
6-9 inches	5 feet
10-14 inches	10 feet
15-19 inches	12 feet
over 19 inches	15 feet

A) **Root Severance.** No roots greater than 2 inches in diameter shall be cut without approval of the DRP Arborist. Tunneling under roots is the approved alternative. Prior to excavation for foundation/footing/walls, or grading or trenching within the *Tree Protection Zone*, roots shall be severed cleanly one-foot outside the *Tree Protection Zone* to the depth of the planned excavation. When roots must be cut, they shall be cut cleanly with a sharp saw to sound wood and flush with the trench site.

B) Excavation. Any approved excavation, demolition, or extraction of material shall be performed with equipment that is placed outside the *Tree Protection Zone*. Hand digging, hydraulic, or pneumatic excavation are permitted methods for excavation within the *Tree Protection Zone*.

C) Heavy Equipment. Use of backhoes, Ditch-Witches, steel tread tractors or other heavy vehicles within the *Tree Protection Zone* is prohibited unless approved by the DRP Arborist. If allowed, a protective root buffer is required.

#### 4.30.4 Tunneling and Directional Drilling

Approved trenching or pipe installation within the *Tree Protection Zone* shall be either cut by hand, air-spade, or by mechanically boring a tunnel under the roots with a horizontal directional drill using hydraulic or pneumatic air excavation technology. In all cases, install the utility pipe immediately, backfill with soil and soak with water within the same day. Tunneling under the root system can greatly reduce both damage to the tree and the cost to repair landscape and other features destroyed in the trenching process. There are times, such as when working in rocky soils and slopes, when tunneling is not a reasonable alternative.

The following recommendations for tunneling depths should be observed:

TRUNK DIAMETER (DBH)	MINIMUM TUNNEL DEPTH
Less than 12 inches	24 inches
12 inches or more	36 inches

#### 4.30.5 Alternative Methods for Hardscape to Prevent Root Cutting

The following remedies should be considered as an alternative to severing tree roots:

- A) Grinding a raised walkway or concrete pad
- B) Ramping the walkway surface over the roots or lifted slab with pliable paving.
- C) Routing the walkway around tree roots
- D) Permeable paving materials (e.g., decomposed granite), interlocking pavers, or flagstone walkways on sand foundations

#### 4.30.6 Using Alternative Base Course Materials

Engineered structural soil mix is an alternative material for hardscape areas near trees. More information can be found at [www.amereq.com](http://www.amereq.com).

#### **4.40 Tree Maintenance During Construction**

Providing adequate maintenance can mitigate stressful changes that occur to a tree's environment during construction. To remain vigorous the tree needs to maintain stored carbohydrates and preserve the effectiveness of its growth regulators. It is recommended that large projects provide:

##### **4.40.1 Irrigation**

Providing supplemental irrigation for trees under water stress may be the single most important treatment. Irrigation should be designed to wet the soil within the *Tree Protection Zone* to the depth of the root zone and to replace that water once it is depleted. Light, frequent irrigation should be avoided. Create a six-inch berm around trees at the edge of the *Tree Protection Zone* and fill with no more than six inches of mulch. Fill the basin with water. Irrigation should wet the top two to three feet of soil to replicate similar volumes and normal seasonal distribution.

##### **4.40.2 Soil Compaction Mitigation**

To prevent negligent encroachment into the *Tree Protection Zone*, trees to be preserved during construction must have the specified type of protection fences in place at all times. Removal of fences, even temporarily, to allow deliveries or equipment access is not allowed unless approved by the DRP Arborist and a root buffer is installed. The root buffer components: mulch, gravel and plywood, must be maintained continually to assure its effectiveness against soil compaction.

##### **4.40.3 Dust Control**

During periods of extended drought, wind or grading, trunks, limbs and foliage should be sprayed with water to remove accumulated construction dust.

#### **4.50 Damage to Trees**

##### **4.50.1 Reporting Injury to Trees**

Any damage or injury to trees shall be reported as soon as possible to the Project Manager or Construction Supervisor, and always to the Park Maintenance Supervisor. The Park Maintenance Supervisor needs to be aware of an injured tree in order to monitor its recovery or progress. Injuries to roots and branches must be repaired immediately.

##### **4.50.2 Contractor Subject to Penalties.**

If a tree designated to remain is removed or irreversibly damaged as determined by the Recreation and Parks Arborist, a contractor may be required to install a replacement tree matching in size, quality and variety, using a contractor designated by the Recreation and Parks Arborist. If an acceptable replacement tree is not available, the contractor may be required to pay damages to the City for the value of the damaged tree in accordance with the guidelines set forth in the Guide for Plant Appraisal, 9th Edition, using the Trunk Formula Method.

#### 4.50.3 Employees Subject to Discipline

In the event of damage to above- or below-ground parts of park trees, the Construction Supervisor or Park Maintenance Supervisor shall conduct an investigation to determine the cause of the damage. If it is found that damage was caused due to the error, negligence, or willfulness of a Department employee, then that employee may be subject to appropriate disciplinary action.

### **4.60 Documents to be Included in all Projects**

#### 4.60.1 Model Tree Protection Specifications for Designers and Project Managers (Appendix G)

This document should be distributed to the Planning and Construction Designers, Project Managers, City Inspectors, bidding contractors, and contracted designing firms.

#### 4.60.2 Tree Protection Summary and Instructions on How to Prevent Damage to Trees During Construction (Appendix I)

This document should be distributed to the Construction and Maintenance staff for implementation during all in-house projects.

### **4.70 Right Of Entry Permits and Documents to be included with every permit**

Carnivals and festivals that are celebrated in our parks provide exceptional and enriching opportunities that bring our communities together. These activities can potentially affect the park environment. Filming crews, food concessions, permitted vendors, and special events activities affect the physical properties of our parks and trees.

In order to sustain a healthy urban forest, it is imperative that all Department staff understands the need to protect park trees. Every individual, organization or agency given a Right of Entry, permit or agreement to enter Department property, should be in compliance with Department policies protecting park trees and be given documentation the will help to ensure tree protection during the permitted activity. The document titled Instructions on How to Prevent Damage to Trees During Construction (Appendix I) shall be distributed to every permittee and the permittee shall comply with these instructions.