



# The City of College Station, Texas

*Embracing the Past, Exploring the Future.*

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## MEMORANDUM

April 2, 2003

**TO:** Parks and Recreation Advisory Board

**THROUGH:** Stephen Beachy, Director Parks and Recreation

**FROM:** Ross Albrecht, Forestry Superintendent

**SUBJECT:** Implementation Recommendations for the Urban Forest Management Plan

After presenting the Urban Forest Management Plan (UFMP) to the City Council on September 26, 2002, we received direction to develop implementation recommendations for possible inclusion in the Fiscal Year 2004 budget. My recommendations for the initial steps of implementing the Plan are listed below. These recommendations are a mixture of action items directly from the Plan and incremental steps that would move the City of College Station towards proactive management of our urban forest. I believe these incremental steps will be necessary, as full implementation of some parts of the Plan will be expensive. This incremental implementation process should be monitored through annual reviews to gauge progress and to formulate the next level of implementation. Even with full implementation, the Plan calls for annual reviews to insure the urban forest management practices employed are current and sufficient to maintain College Station's ever changing Urban Forest.

I have divided my recommendations into policy and action related areas. Generally the policy areas can be implemented with little monetary resources. The action items are directed at the actual work that will be required to initiate actively managing our urban forest. As such, these areas will require additional resources to meet these goals. These items are not presented in any order. However, the Plan recommends, and I strongly support that the development of a risk management program is a critical first step. This will drive any subsequent management activity implementation, as well as start the City towards proactive measures to manage and reduce our risk exposure.

### A. Policy Related Items

#### 1. Develop, adopt and implement a 'Risk Management Program for Urban Trees'

-Specifically for the management of both public and private trees that impacts the visibility of traffic control devices, visibility at intersections, and/or hinders vehicular, bicycle, or pedestrian traffic flow.

This Program should include:

-A *Urban Tree Hazard Reduction Policy Statement* that clearly defines the goals of the program.

-From the Policy Statement, establish the *Level of Care* that is manageable for the City. This manageable level should be reviewed and updated annually.

-Develop and implement a *Risk Management Strategy* to obtain the desired level of care. This strategy would detail the actual work and processes that would be employed to obtain the

established level of care. This Risk Management Strategy will need to be updated annually with the Level of Care review.

The Risk Management Program for Urban Trees should address:

- Street trees (public trees that originate from the street right-of-way)
- Private trees that originate from private property that impact traffic and visibility
- Park, municipal facility, and greenways trees
- Electrical easement and ROW trees
- Emergency Planning, Response, Recovery, and Mitigation, particularly for wind event damage to existing trees

2. Review existing ordinances to identify and strengthen requirements that effect the urban forest

Review all existing ordinances that potentially impact the urban forest (public and private). A level of involvement by the City towards private trees will need to be established. Regardless of this level, there are several areas that could benefit from coordinated proactive planning to preserve the existing public urban forest and provide for its future.

3. Public Education efforts

Develop a public education campaign designed to provide comprehensive information about maintaining the existing urban forest and planning and implementing projects to insure the survival of the urban forest into the future. This could be aimed at residents to help them understand the importance of trees. In addition, this information could be used to instill the preservation and planning for the urban forest ideals within the development community.

**B. Action Related Items**

As opposed to the Policy Related items, the Action Related items will involve a significant increase in the financial commitment of the City over existing levels. However, these increases will directly reduce the hazards and liability level that exist throughout the city.

1. Street Tree Management

The Plan's recommendations for initial street management include a full inventory, identification and removal of all hazards, and a cyclical pruning and inventory update process. In addition, there would be an annual review of progress and budgetary adjustments as needed to meet stated goals. There are several other recommendations beyond this initial response, such as promoting species diversification, proper species selection and placement, annual planting goals, and implementation of a pruning cycle for new tree care.

My recommendations include the following incremental steps, however it should be remembered that the overall goal would remain as listed in the Plan. As stated above, my recommendations are intended to provide incremental steps to reaching the overall goal of a broad based proactive management of the urban forest.

- Conduct a street tree inventory to locate all hazard trees, trees with hazardous deadwood, and vegetation conflicts with traffic control devices and traffic flow. (\$15-20,000)
- Contract for the removal of the hazard trees and pruning to gain required visibility and traffic flow. (\$75 - \$100,000)
- Contract on either an 'area by area' approach or on an 'as needed' basis for tree removal and pruning for visibility and traffic flow. This set up will potentially mirror utility line clearance operations already in place.
- Conduct the inventory every 5-8 years, and follow up with the required work.

2. Parkland, Municipal Facility, and Greenways Tree Management

As with the Plan's recommendations for street tree management, the recommendations for this area are similar, and consequently extensive in scope and cost. As above, my recommendations are for smaller incremental steps towards the overall goals of the Plan. In these areas there is an ever-increasing amount of deadwood, hazards, and items that need to be addressed for the public's safety and the health of the trees. The Plan's recommendations designate the existing three-man Forestry crew to accomplish these maintenance items. However, without a 100% time commitment to managing the trees in these areas, we will be unable to make progress. Actions must be taken to enable this crew to address forestry items everyday. Even with that commitment, it will be necessary for annual reviews of progress and potential budgetary changes to insure adequate resources are available for this area.

There is a potential helping step in the 2003 Capital Improvement Project bond election. A new shop is proposed, possibly at the current landfill site, to alleviate over crowding and provide adequate storage space this area's various vehicles, equipment, and bulk materials. This will provide a better working environment for the existing forestry, horticulture, and irrigation crews. In addition, this should allow the expansion of crew size or numbers in the future.