

City of Columbia Tree Board

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To Whom it May Concern:

The City of Columbia Tree Board was recently informed of an upcoming capital improvement project that the city is undertaking in the form of a commuter trail installation. The local group, It's Our Wild Nature, presented the board two reports prepared by two separate certified arborists outlining conflicts with planned trail construction and existing trees, and suggestions to mitigate these potential conflicts. Information on the overall scope, intent, and history of the project was also made available to the board.

Trees and infrastructure conflicts are commonplace and will continue to be as the City of Columbia grows into the future. Additionally, both trees and infrastructure provide valuable benefits to the communities they serve and Columbia has acknowledged these benefits on many occasions. Examples include continued development of community parks and trail networks, and adoption of documents such as the Urban Forest Master Plan and the upcoming Climate Adaptation Plan.

Knowing that the City is seeking to promote both the benefits of development and trees, the Tree Board has developed two recommendations to aid in this endeavor, moving forward.

1. The Board recommends that the City pursue development of an internal tree canopy policy that better considers tree-related decisions in the capital improvement project design process. Springfield Missouri already has such a policy in place, and it has shown to be successful not only in bringing design professionals and tree professionals together, but in achieving canopy goals that internal documents (Urban Forest Master Plan) set as benchmarks for the future.

2. In the interim, while the internal policy is being developed, the Board recommends that the City seek the input of certified arborists (staff or contractual) during the design process of capital improvements projects. Not only will this added expertise advocate for trees, but it will help project managers make better educated decisions about trees and infrastructure conflicts in terms of risk mitigation, tree preservation, and post-construction site restoration.

With the recent adoption of the new unified development code and the updated requirements expected of private development as it relates to trees, the City has an opportunity to “lead by example” in showing that they too put in the worthwhile, added effort to account for trees in the design phase of development projects. The Board feels that the aforementioned recommendations are simple, practical steps to act on this opportunity. Please contact the Tree Board for any additional information.

Respectfully Submitted,

City of Columbia Tree Board
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Michael Kyd, Vice Chair
Andrew Lister
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