

City of Columbia Tree Board

September 24, 2019

Dear Planning and Zoning Commission,

The Tree Board of the City of Columbia has learned of an existing conflict within the Unified Development Code (UDC) relating to the location of underground utilities and street trees. The Commission is currently in the process of addressing the conflict. It is the Board's understanding that property developers are now fully realizing the effects of this conflict in the UDC and that clarification is needed quickly. More specifically, Sec 24-92 (b) of the Columbia Code of Ordinances states, "No tree shall be placed within four (4) feet, measured horizontally, of any underground utility." The City of Columbia has historically placed gas lines between the sidewalks and curb within the street right-of-way. The UDC designates this same area of right-of-way as the required location of street trees. Based on available right-of-way and the four-foot separation requirement, both entities cannot occupy the same space.

It is our understanding that the Commission is exploring widening the right -of-way to mitigate this conflict. The Tree Board's concern is that even with a wider right-of-way, street trees will not thrive or survive alongside utility installations in this same space.

The Tree Board understands that if extra right -of-way is acquired by the city, developable area is reduced, increasing unit costs. This cost will likely be passed on to the lot purchaser, home builder, and subsequently, the homeowner. The Board points to these examples only to impress upon the commission that balance is needed to provide for the success of trees and development and that balance comes with an equitable cost.

The Tree Board, in its role to advocate for the City's existing and future tree resources, has developed the following recommendations to aid in addressing the aforementioned conflict:

1. Restrict utilities from the location between the curb and sidewalk in new developments. Most other municipalities in Missouri do not allow utilities in this location. Leaving this space for street trees will enhance the likelihood of their growth and long-term survival. The Tree Board can assist with this solution by exploring how other municipalities protect street trees from utilities by dedicating this location to trees only.
2. Use the space between the curb and sidewalk to provide for the long-term growth and survival of street trees. Currently, street trees are not given adequate opportunity to be established, let alone grow and survive. For example, harsh conditions such as compacted heavy clay soils,

restricted growing space, and limited staff and funds for maintenance contribute to decreased growth and survival of Columbia's street trees. Tree survival and growth rates can be improved with better guidelines for installation, maintenance, and soil requirements in the right-of-way. Adequate staff and funding for the City's arborist (and forestry program) for street tree maintenance will further ensure the health and success of our street trees. The Tree Board can assist with developing planting and maintenance guidelines to promote street tree growth and survival.

The Tree Board acknowledges that the City and its citizens are seeking to protect and expand our urban tree resources, which provide cooling effects, reduce air pollution, decrease runoff, and contribute to public health. We believe that our recommendations are simple, practical steps to provide for the success of this endeavor. Please contact the Tree Board for additional information.

Respectfully Submitted,

Tree Board
City of Columbia

February 13, 2019

RE: Street Tree Ordinance

Mr. Tim Teddy,

In regard to the revised ordinance change regarding subdivision and zoning codes, specifically tree plantings within street Right of Way, Ameren Missouri would offer the following comments for consideration.

Our understanding is that the ordinance requires tree plantings that would be placed within street Right of Way between the curb and sidewalk. Ameren's installation of natural gas mains has traditionally been in this location. Our standard installation depth is 30-in of cover over our facility. Being in the area between the curb and sidewalk has allowed Ameren to maintain, repair, cut off or install new service lines with little or no conflict with trees, landscaping etc... Ameren's gas mains typically operate at 55psig; therefore it is desirable our facilities are within easy access in cases of emergency and also as far away from structures as possible.

Assuming that the usual scenario would be that Ameren's gas main would be installed prior to the plantings, there is concern that during the plantings damage could result during the excavation. Service lines coming off the gas main would also be a concern.

Also of concern is that after the plantings are complete we may be asked to provide service to a customer. At that time the planting could possibly cause a conflict with the routing of the service line. Ameren makes every attempt to install service lines by the most direct route. Plantings could cause us to install a service line with multiple directional turns which can lead to future confusion and more exposure. Along with this, if Ameren is asked by the customer to disconnect gas service we are required to cap the service at the main. If planting are over the service tap, the tree could suffer damage or potentially have to be removed to accomplish the work. Along with this, during an emergency we often have to squeeze off our polyethylene mains. Tree plantings could lead to delays in shutting off the gas due to being in the area that needs to be excavated for the shut off.

Moving our normal location to beneath the sidewalk poses some of the same issue as well as the planting could still be an issue since they would be in close proximity to the gas main. Relocating in to the utility easement is also undesirable as then you have multiple utilities in close proximity. Obviously since gas is hazardous, we do not want it close to electric facilities or even phone or fiber lines. Excavating in the utility easement would become extremely difficult for all utilities. If this ordinance stands as written Ameren would suggest that we have "rights" to the very back edge of the R/W and the first few feet of the utility easement. This would require that all utilities be in agreement with this layout so that we can all fit our facilities in the proper location.

It would appear that with the proposed changes, there would be increased costs in not only maintaining Ameren's gas system but serving our customers which could affect natural gas rates. Along with this is the issue of cost related to potential damage to trees while making repairs etc.. Although these are concerns, our ultimate goal is to protect life and property of the public and Ameren personnel. Anything that could compromise that would be strongly opposed.