

Minneapolis Tree Preservation Ordinance: An Overview

BACKGROUND

Minneapolis is creating new rules to protect trees during construction, called a tree preservation ordinance (TPO). To help create this ordinance we are asking community members to share what matters most to them about trees in Minneapolis. We'll use this information to help create clear, enforceable rules that work. As we gather your valuable input, the information below provides an overview of TPOs and what you might expect in the future.

Tree Preservation Ordinances (TPO)

A TPO is a local rule that helps prevent unnecessary tree removal and damage during construction. It sets rules for protecting trees, when and how to replace them, and what happens if rules aren't followed.

Who it will impact

Projects that need City review or permits and involve removing trees or working near tree roots.

Why it's happening

Trees are lost during construction and due to pests and diseases. Emerald ash borer (EAB), an invasive insect, has resulted in the loss of thousands of trees in our community. Trees provide many benefits from energy savings to improving air quality. Minneapolis wants to protect its mature trees, reduce tree loss during construction, and ensure new trees are planted and grow healthy after construction. Creating policies for construction projects that need a permit is one way to educate and help ensure tree preservation is planned (when possible) during construction.

HOW A TPO WORKS

Ordinance steps and timeline of events

- After public engagement, City staff will draft ordinance rules in partnership with consultants. A public hearing will follow this, and City Council will vote on the TPO. If approved, the TPO is published and goes into effect on a chosen date.
- The TPO will apply to new development projects that fall under the rules and to phases of ongoing projects as they come under regulation.

"Protected tree" definition

- Protected trees are named "significant trees" due to their size, species, age or health.
- Don't worry: Invasive, dead or clearly hazardous (risk) trees can be removed.

Projects and activities covered by a TPO

- Covered projects: Private-property projects that need a City permit and involve removing protected trees, heavy work near tree roots, or any digging/grading near trees.
- What the City will regulate: Planning before construction, site work, actual building, and after-care of trees.

Key Takeaways



Protect trees during construction

Keep tree roots safe by putting up barriers and avoiding heavy work in the root zone.



Replace what's lost

If a tree is removed, new trees will need to be planted on site if there is room. If not, the project will pay a fee that funds planting new trees somewhere else in the City.



Ensure trees stay healthy

A TPO ensures trees that stay on site remain healthy, with good soil, and care during and after construction.

TREE PROTECTION

Protecting trees during construction

- Protect the root zone: Put sturdy barriers around tree roots; avoid heavy machinery, stockpiles and storage of materials along with digging in those areas. This area is called the protected root zone (PRZ) or tree protection zone (TPZ).
- Respect soil and water: A tree's roots extend far beyond the "drip line" or canopy edges of trees. Don't compact the soil under trees; water the protected and newly planted trees during and after the project.
- Pruning and removal rules: Protected trees should not be harmed by unnecessary pruning. Any pruning for clearance should take place from November-early March when diseases and insects are not active. Only remove trees that have been approved to be removed.
- Demolition and grading: Follow procedures to protect roots and soil as much as possible during demolition and site work. Use designated entry and exit routes, consider using plywood or thick mulch to prevent excessive soil compaction.



A large tree enclosed by an orange plastic mesh fence to protect it during construction activities.



A tree's protected root zone (PRZ) is often considered to be the part of the roots that lie directly below its branches within an area known as the dripline.

Tree replacement and planting guidelines

Replace trees: There will be a stated rule (replacement ratio) that says how many new trees must be planted for each tree removed. This can depend on the size of the tree removed.

- Plant climate-adapted, resilient and native species that do well in Minneapolis; appropriate sizes for the planting site. There will be a list available to guide in this process.
- A short-term care plan (like a guaranteed watering schedule) helps new trees establish for a few years.
- If planting on-site isn't possible, money may be used to fund plantings ("fee-in-lieu") nearby.

TPO enforcement and follow up

- City staff in Planning and Health Departments will review plans and inspect sites.
- If rules aren't followed, penalties can include fines, stop-work orders, or requirements to fix the problem (replanting, remediation). There will be a process to appeal if a project thinks a ruling is wrong.

Stay informed and participate

- Public input: The community helps shape what matters most—shade for hot summers, flood protection through healthy root systems, and fair rules across neighborhoods.



Scan the QR code for more information and to take the TPO survey, or visit minneapolismn.gov/city-trees

or contact the Project Manager and City Trees Manager, Sydney Schaaf at Sydney.Schaaf@minneapolismn.gov