

# FORESTRY RECODIFICATION



Overview of City Forestry Operations and  
Proposed Ordinance Changes

**05/11/2026**

Matthew Puckett

# FORESTRY RESPONSIBILITIES

- Our division is one of the few with both codified maintenance and enforcement duties
- We are legally required to maintain public trees and enforce ordinances related to tree care, safety, and compliance
- Internal and contracted crews maintain the urban forest
- Staff Foresters inspect tree-related issues and ensure residents, private tree companies, and city departments comply with forestry ordinances and regulations



**Forestry crews performing cleanup, 2024**

# CITY FORESTRY

- 22 Forestry Team Members
- 13 of those positions are field arborists
- 2 foresters are federally funded until 2028 through a USDA grant
- 2 positions are classified as unfunded for 2026

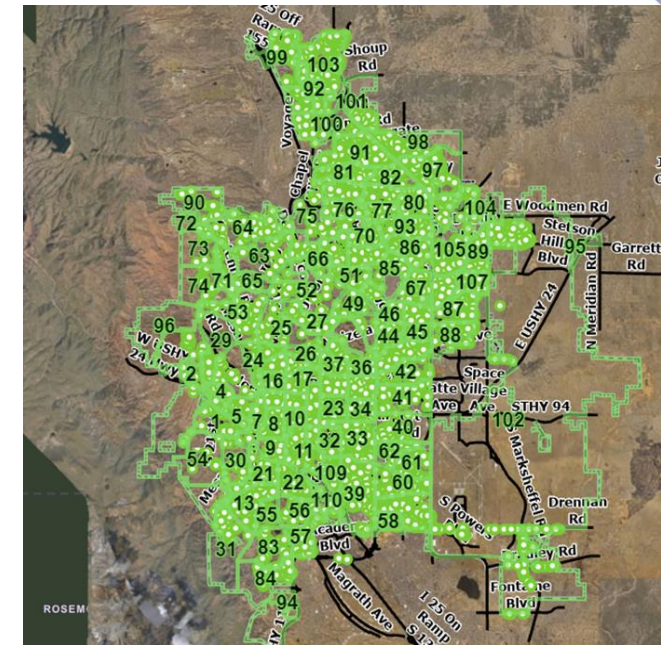


**Forestry team members, 2025**

# MANAGEMENT AREA

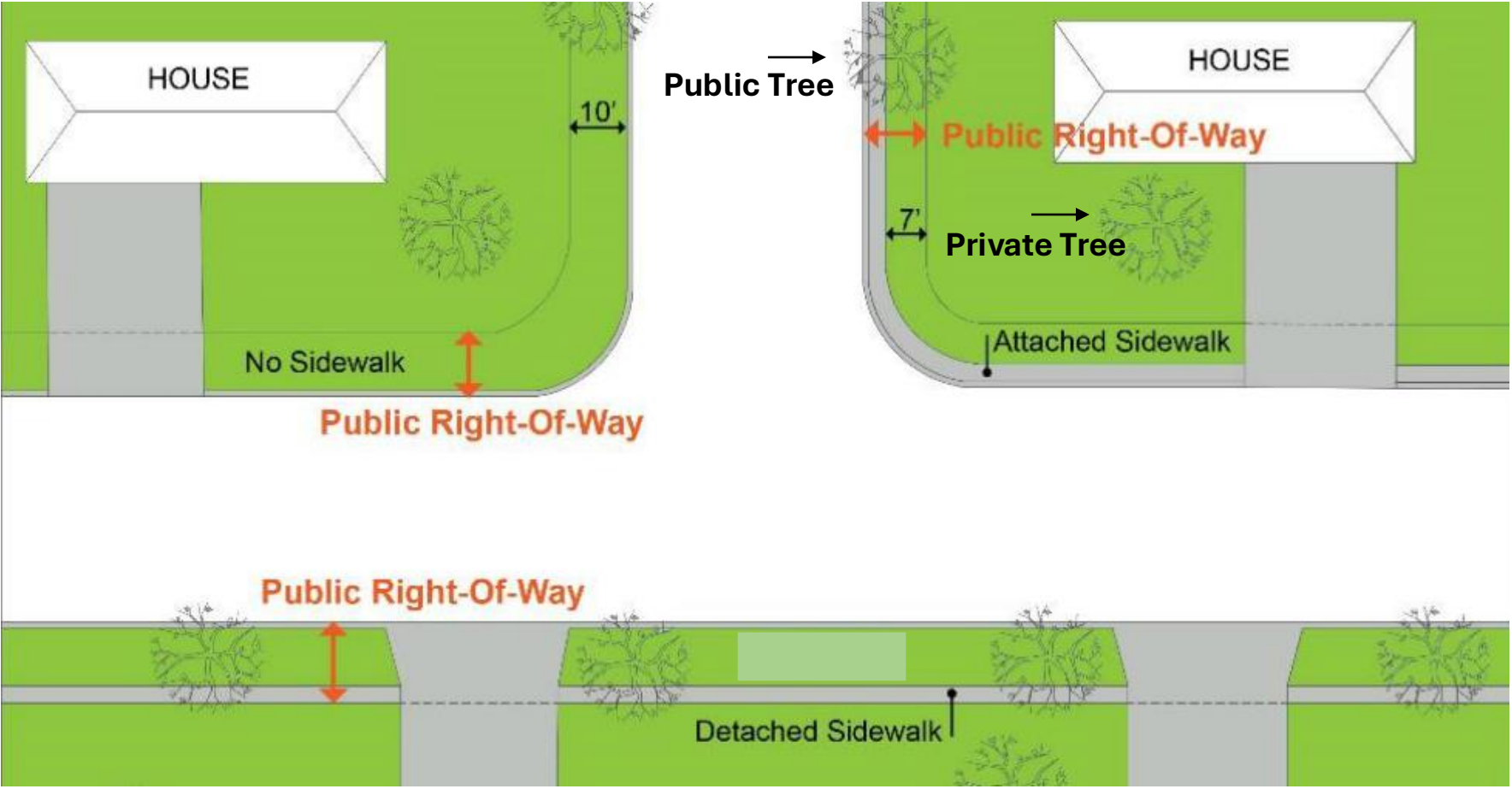


Task / Metric	Value
Right-of-way trees managed	130,000
Park trees managed	20,000
<b>Total public trees</b>	<b>150,000</b>
Field arborists	13
<b>Trees per field arborist</b>	<b>Approximately 11,500</b>
Current annual trees maintained	5,000
<b>Current full-cycle pruning interval</b>	<b>30 years</b>
<b>Industry-recommended pruning cycle</b>	<b>7 years</b>
<b>Removal/Pruning Ratio</b>	<b>For every 18 trees removed, 1 is planted</b>



Overview of tree inventory, 2026

# PUBLIC/ PRIVATE TREES



# REDUCE RISK

- Our work is primarily driven by citizen service requests
- High call volume directs resources towards reactive work
- Public canopy is maturing; older trees increase risk and require more frequent care from certified arborists.
- Top priority is reducing public risk while maintaining an enjoyable, healthy urban forest
- Public safety-focused management ensures the community can continue to benefit from our trees



**Example: Public tree marked for removal in Colorado Springs**

# LEVEL OF SERVICE GOALS



Task	Timeframe
<b>Citizen service request</b>	<b>5 days</b>
Inspection of service request	30 days
<b>Important priority task</b>	<b>5 days</b>
High-priority task	90 days
Medium/low-priority tasks	As resources allow

**\*Estimated timeframes are dependent on resource availability**

# PARKS → PUBLIC WORKS



- City Forestry was moved to Public Works in 2022
  - Forestry's maintenance responsibilities aligned more closely with Public Works operations
  - Street tree management, inspections, and infrastructure-related tasks fit better under Public Works' oversight
  - The Operations and Maintenance Division offered increased support and resource availability
- Recodify the Urban Forest responsibility from Chapter 4, Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services to Chapter 3, Public Works
- **Despite minor revisions, 1968 was the original Urban Forest codification, and we are updating these ordinances for the first time in 58 years**

# DEFINITIONS



- **PROPERTY OWNER:** The owner or occupant of real property. The occupant of the premises will be considered an agent of the property owner for the purpose of serving notice
- **CITY TREE:** A tree that has been approved by the City forester and planted in the right-of-way or on a City property.
- **NATIVE VEGETATION:** Naturally occurring trees and shrubs that were not deliberately planted, including but not limited to, ponderosa pines, junipers, pinon pines, and Gambel oak.
- **WEED TREE:** A woody plant that is not specifically planted for the purpose of landscaping or food production and is a species that is not on the approved street tree list. Left unchecked it has the potential to grow into a tree exceeding twelve feet (12') in height that would create pedestrian, traffic, or other hazards due to poor structure and growth habits, brittle wood, or aggressive growth.
- **CITY FORESTER:** A professional forester appointed by the manager to manage the urban forest and supervise the City's professional forestry and arboricultural staff, or the City forester's designated representative or agent.

# DUTIES OF PROPERTY OWNERS



It is the duty of a property owner to maintain or remove any vegetation in the adjacent right-of-way which

- (1) Was planted or allowed to grow or establish and was not on the approved street tree list;

# APPROVED TREE LIST



- Dynamic document that can be updated as new species prove suitable for our climate
- Prevents planting of invasive or unsuitable species in the public right-of-way
- Ensures trees near streets are appropriate for urban conditions
- Minimizes fruit drop and cleanup issues
- Avoids invasive root systems that damage sidewalks and utilities
- Reduces risk tied to weak branch structure for some species
- Improves resilience to insects and diseases
- <https://coloradosprings.gov/document/approvedstreettreelist2025.pdf>



## Approved Street Tree List for Colorado Springs

LARGE (OVER 45ft) Minimum 40ft spacing recommended between trees		Water Use	Okay Under Powerlines	Considerations
Common Name	Scientific Name			
Catalpa	<i>Catalpa speciosa</i>	Low	No	Large seed pods
Elm hybrid sp.	<i>Ulmus sp. hybrids</i>	Low-Med	No	Scale insect issues
Ginkgo (male only)	<i>Ginkgo biloba</i>	Med	No	Slow growing
Hackberry	<i>Celtis occidentalis</i>	Low	No	
Honeylocust	<i>Gleditsia triacanthos</i>	Low	No	
Kentucky Coffeetree	<i>Gymnocladus dioica</i>	Low	No	Seedless varieties available
Linden, American	<i>Tilia americana</i>	Med	No	Not tolerant of road salts

# NON-APPROVED TREES



**Non-approved trees blocking sidewalk accessibility and stop sign visibility**

# DUTIES OF PROPERTY OWNERS



**It is the duty of a property owner to maintain or remove any vegetation in the adjacent right-of-way which:**

- (1) Was planted or allowed to grow or establish and was not on the approved street tree list;
- (2) Was planted after January 1, 2020 without a City Forester's permit;

- The permit is free, and we respond within 48 hours
- <https://coloradosprings.gov/planttree>

# NON-APPROVED TREES



**Non-approved trees blocking sidewalk accessibility and stop sign visibility**

# DUTIES OF PROPERTY OWNERS



**It is the duty of a property owner to maintain or remove any vegetation in the adjacent right-of-way which:**

- (1) Was planted or allowed to grow or establish and was not on the approved street tree list;
- (2) Was planted after January 1, 2020 without a City Forester's permit;
- (3) As determined by the City Forester, obstructs, restricts, or conflicts with the necessary and safe use of the right-of-way or causes damage; or
- (4) Is a weed tree or sprout which, as determined by the City Forester, may in the future obstruct, restrict, or conflict with the necessary and safe use of the right-of-way or cause damage to City infrastructure, including but not limited to curb, gutter, sidewalk, signs, or streetlights

# WEED TREE EXAMPLES



**“Weed tree“ blocking sidewalk**

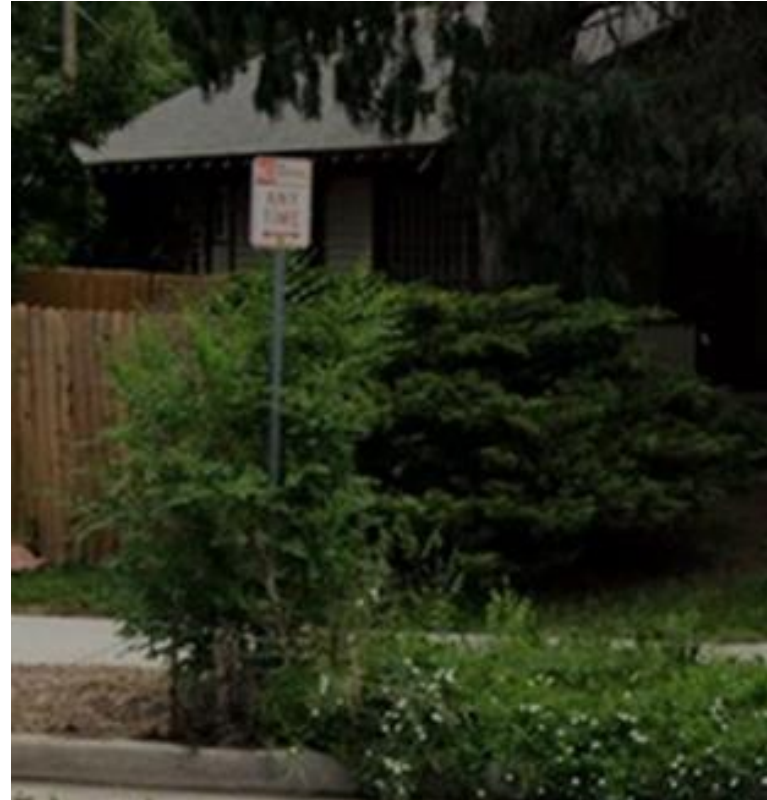


**“Weed tree” blocking traffic visibility**

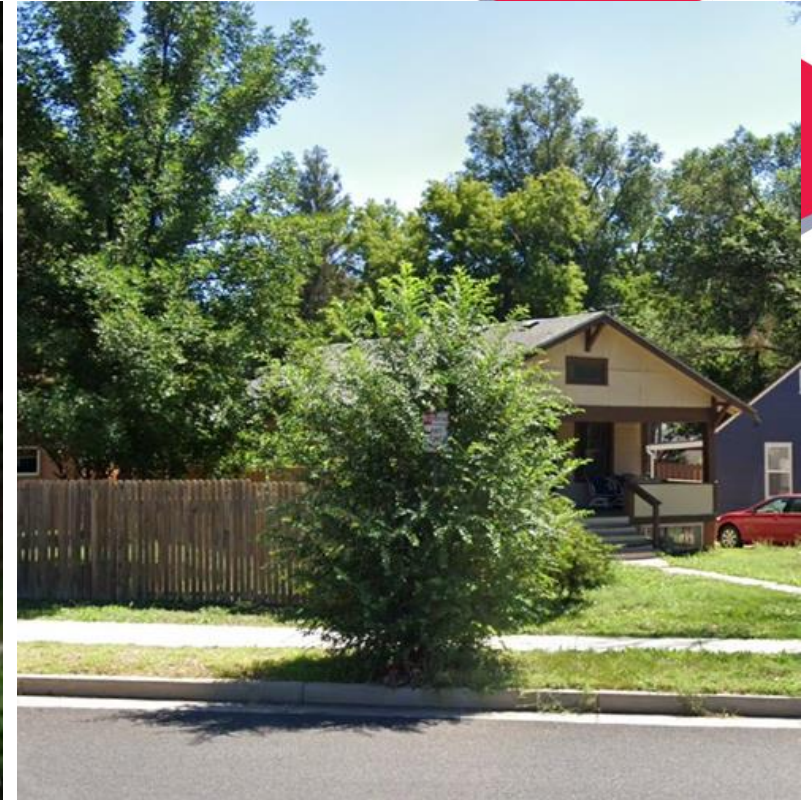
# WEED TREE EXAMPLES



2019



2021



2024

# WEED TREE EXAMPLES



2017

# WEED TREE EXAMPLES



2019



# WEED TREE EXAMPLE



**Before**

# WEED TREE EXAMPLE



After

# DUTIES OF PROPERTY OWNERS

- (D) It is the duty of the property owner to maintain, in accord with this article, any native vegetation in the right-of-way.



**Ponderosa pines located in a no sidewalk right-of-way**

# DUTIES OF PROPERTY OWNERS



(D) Where a property line abuts an alleyway, abutting property owners are responsible for maintaining or removing vegetation, to include weed trees and sprouts, from the property line to the centerline of the alley.

- This aligns with code chapter “public offenses” 9.6.307 to include “weed trees” as shown below:

WEED: Any plant which:

- A. Ordinarily grows without cultivation,
- B. Is not grown for the purpose of landscaping or food production, and
- C. Will attain a large growth of not less than nine inches (9") in height or grows or accumulates so as to become a fire, traffic or pedestrian hazard when mature.

# DUTIES OF PROPERTY OWNERS



(H) Trees, as shown on an approved landscape plan, must be maintained by the adjacent landowner, homeowners' association, or special district as dictated in the approved landscape plan, development plan, or plat.

- Landscape plans are detailed, scaled technical drawings and supporting documents required by city code (Part 7.4.9) for development, illustrating how an outdoor space is organized, planted, and irrigated.

# DUTIES OF PROPERTY OWNERS

(F) A property owner must cut, trim, prune, or remove any privately owned trees or vegetation located upon their property to provide for the safe and convenient use of rights-of-way in accord with the requirements set forth in City Code § 3.9.202.



**Private tree canopy too low over public sidewalk**



**Private tree obstructing stop sign**

# GENERAL ENFORCEMENT



## Section 3.9.301- 3.9.305 (Proposed Ordinance Changes)

- Adding this language, allows code enforcement the ability to enforce tree related issues on our behalf
- This language is taken directly from Chapter 9.6.310 through 9.9.311 to equip Code Enforcement and City Forestry with the authority to enforce management of weed trees, unapproved street trees, and private trees impacting City infrastructure
- Supports the use of abatements, notices and orders, and other enforcement tools
- Code violations are acted upon in response to citizen driven concerns

# GENERAL ENFORCEMENT



- Contact property owner informally (door knock, call back number)
- Check if owner occupied
- No contact, issue hazard notification
- 14 days to respond
- No response, issue Notice and Order
- Abatement or Appeal from property owner in 10 days
- Follow existing Code Enforcement Process



PUBLIC WORKS  
Forestry Division  
(719) 385-5942



## TREE AND SHRUB HAZARD NOTIFICATION

Attention Property Owner or Resident: \_\_\_\_\_  
Address

A tree or shrub hazard exists at the above address which is the property owner's responsibility to correct.

Specifically:

- Branches from a private tree overgrowing the street. Please prune any branches that obstruct traffic visibility or flow. A fourteen (14) foot clearance is needed over the street to any branch above the street (*City Code 4.4.104*).
- Branches from shrubs and/or private trees obstructing a sidewalk. Please prune any branches that obstruct pedestrian traffic. A clearance of eight (8) feet is needed from the ground to any branch above the sidewalk (*City Code 4.4.104*).
- Shrubs or private trees blocking traffic visibility. Please prune any trees or shrubs that are currently causing or may cause a problem with traffic visibility in the future (*City Code 7.4.102G*).
- Shrubs or private trees blocking a traffic sign. Please prune any branches that are blocking a traffic (stop, yield, street, caution, other) sign (*City Code 4.4.104*).
- Hazardous limb(s) or tree(s). Please prune or remove any limbs or trees that pose a hazard to adjacent property (*City Code 4.4.203A*).
- Weed tree sprouts allowed to grow. Please remove any weed tree sprout from the right of way before it becomes large and causes any of the above hazards. (*City Code 4.4.101 and 9.6.304*).

WE ASK THAT YOU CORRECT THE ABOVE HAZARD AT YOUR PROPERTY WITHIN \_\_\_\_ DAYS FROM THIS NOTIFICATION DATE.

Problem location and description:

Forester: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Please contact: \_\_\_\_\_ after completion of work to resolve this notice.

# STREET TREE PROGRAM



## Part 3 Section 4.4.301- 4.4.306 (Current Ordinances)

There is hereby established a street tree fee which shall be set annually by City Council resolution. The City Forester may waive the payment of any street tree fee where the lot or particular lot frontage is sufficiently forested to comply with the legislative declaration, or in accord with the procedures of section.

- The original Street Tree Program (1980–2009) used developer-contributed fees to provide a new street tree for first homebuyers within new subdivisions.
- The program and its associated fees were discontinued in 2009 during the recession due to staffing constraints, and it has remained inactive since that time.
- Upcoming ordinance updates will remove this outdated code section, and the remaining funds will be used for citywide tree planting and tree-replacement efforts, which will be supported by future General Fund or external funding sources.

# CLOSING

- Our internal Forestry crews are fully equipped to handle large diameter, technical City tree maintenance
- Enforcement language is consistent with existing weed-code standards
- Other Front Range municipalities place full responsibility for City trees on adjacent property owners. We do not
- Our goal is to reduce time spent maintaining unmanaged, invasive or volunteer weed trees that result from neglect, so that we can focus on our core responsibility for approved trees



**Forestry crews, 2025**

# QUESTIONS/ CONTACT



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Arbor Day Ceremonies, 2025



Forestry  
Division



ASCA RCA #926  
Registered Consulting Arborist\*