



## University Park • Denver, Colorado

To: **Mike Swanson** (City Forester), **Laura Aldrete** (Community Planning and Development Executive Director), **Paul Kashmann** (District 6 Councilman)

From: University Park Community Council Tree Advocacy Group

Date: October 12, 2020

Re: Proposed changes to current tree ordinance

The University Park Community Council Tree Advocacy Group (TAG) was recently formed by residents concerned over the increased loss of trees in our neighborhood. TAG's mission is to protect and enhance the tree canopy in University Park.

Ongoing infill in our neighborhood continues to result in the removal of our existing trees, often in the back or side yard. We believe there is a need to address this type of tree loss in all of Denver's Residential Zone Districts, not just in our neighborhood. We urge that city experts, staffers from the appropriate agencies, and a stakeholder group representing different perspectives consider the following:

- 1) Adopt a new city ordinance to allow city oversight of trees on **the entire lot** being developed in all residentially zoned districts, not just those in the right of way and front/side setbacks. The tree ordinance was updated in 2007 to include protection of trees in the front setback, but not in the back or side yards (with the exception of side yard protection on corner lots). The goal of this proposed new city ordinance is to ensure that healthy trees, and especially those designated as Denver Champions or Notable Trees by Denver Forestry, remain in place to enhance the health and character of Denver's neighborhoods.
- 2) A **tree replacement** requirement for the removed trees should be included as part of this new ordinance. It would apply to all tree species not on the Colorado Department of Agriculture's Noxious Weeds list and all trees with a trunk diameter greater than 6 inches (which is defined by the City as an Established

Tree). The number of required replacement trees should be a function of the size of the tree being removed, ex. 2 replacement trees for trees with trunk diameters between 6 – 12 inches, 4 replacement trees for trees with trunk diameters between 12 – 24 inches, etc. The developer could either plant the replacement trees on-site or make a payment to Denver Forestry to be used for planting replacement trees in the area.

- 3) It is currently unlawful to remove trees from a residential lot's front/primary/side setbacks during construction or from the public right-of-way. To ensure the city is compensated for the "full appraised value of the tree" that is illegally removed, consider replacing the word "may" with "will" where it appears in Sections 57-20(b) and 57-25(b). This could increase the City's funds for tree related programs by making the compensation a requirement instead of a possibility.
- 4) Provide a year or two of post-planting care program for trees planted by the city in the public right-of-way to help ensure their survival

These proposals are consistent with the recommendations in Blueprint Denver, the University Park Neighborhood Plan (adopted in 2008), and in Metro Denver's 2013 Tree Canopy Assessment.

The *University Park Neighborhood Plan* highlights the importance of trees to the character of University Park. One of its principal recommendations was the protection of the neighborhood trees with a Tree Protection Strategy that includes new tools to preserve the existing tree canopy and plant new trees in the neighborhood.

Blueprint Denver recognized the citywide concern over Denver's tree canopy and included the recommendation to: *"Strengthen standards to protect trees and explore requirements and/or incentives to mitigate tree loss during redevelopment on both public and private property to help achieve Denver's tree canopy goal."*

The *Metro Denver's 2013 Tree Canopy Assessment* estimated that the tree canopy in the City of Denver provides \$122 million a year in benefits (improved air quality, energy savings, stormwater control and increased property values).

Thank you for considering our ideas to begin addressing the issue of Denver's tree canopy loss in residential neighborhoods. We look forward to hearing your thoughts.

Sincerely,

Alan Dresser and Rosemary Stoffel (on behalf of the University Park Community Council Tree Advocacy Group (TAG))

c: Cate Humby and Linda Hanselman – TAG Cochairs