



REPORT TO PLANNING COMMISSION

CITY OF COLLINSVILLE

APPLICATION NUMBER(S)	TA 26-07
APPLICATION NAME:	Tree Preservation (Text Amendment)
APPLICANT NAME:	City of Collinsville 125 South Center Street Collinsville, IL 62234
APPLICANT'S REQUEST:	A City-initiated request for approval of amendments to Title 17 (Zoning) as it relates to tree preservation requirements.
COMMISSION MEETING DATE:	July 9, 2026
CASE MANAGER:	Caitlin Rice, AICP, Senior Planner
RECOMMENDATION:	APPROVAL

REQUEST

The City of Collinsville has initiated a request to amend the following sections of *Title 17—Zoning of the City's Code of Ordinances* as it relates to tree preservation requirements. The intent of this amendment is to clarify regulations and to ensure that trees are required to be preserved or replaced upon issuance of grading permits. The following section is proposed to be amended:

Section 17.080.040. Landscape plan required

Section 17.080.050. Tree preservation

Section 17.080.070. Tree replacement or mitigation

BACKGROUND

The City is seeking to adopt a Text Amendment that will revise the Zoning ordinance to clarify what type of site work triggers a tree survey and tree preservation or mitigation plan and strengthen standards for replacement trees.

The intent of the current landscaping ordinance in Title 17 (Zoning) includes: *to provide for the preservation of larger native trees, which provide a valuable amenity to the urban and suburban environment and prevent damage to and unnecessary removal of these trees during the land development process.*

Staff has discovered a gap in the current regulations that may permit the clearing of trees without requiring any preservation or mitigation through the issuance of a grading permit only, with no site development plan. The ordinance also lacks a mechanism to require replacement trees when clearing is done illegally, or when lacking any documentation of what was removed. The current regulations require a tree survey, tree preservation plan and tree replacement or mitigation when development occurs that removes or damages trees, specifically citing a site plan or subdivision. The current ordinance also relies on knowing the minimum site building area to determine the amount of trees to be replaced.

Occasionally, the City receives grading permit applications requesting the clearing of vegetation or soil disturbance that has no immediate plans for future development (i.e. no site plan or subdivision). Staff's current interpretation requires a tree survey of the property prior to clearing, so there is record of what trees were removed and can be referenced for what is required to be replaced when the property eventually develops, and the minimum site building area can be determined.

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BACKGROUND

This creates a 'loophole' where a developer could potentially apply for a grading permit only, clear the site of all vegetation and mature trees and not be required to replace or mitigate trees until the property eventually develops. Requiring a tree survey for any grading permit provides a little safety net, however, it could be several years to decades before the property develops, with no tree replacement or mitigation on site or elsewhere in the community.

As the intent of the landscaping ordinance under Title 17 (Zoning) aims to prevent unnecessary removal of healthy trees, staff is seeking to amend Title 17 and Title 18 to ensure that a tree survey and tree replacement or mitigation is required upon any clearing or tree removal, regardless of immediate development plans.

Removal of mature trees with no mitigation can have immediate and long term impacts to ecosystem services including removal of wildlife habitat, decreases in erosion control functions, reduction in water quality, and increases in stormwater runoff. The City has two grading permits minor and major, regulated under Title 18—Land Development.

- Major Grading Permits are issued for projects developing or disturbing an area of 10,000 sq. ft. or more or exceeds 100 cubic yards and land disturbance within 25 feet of a river, lake, pond, stream, sinkhole, or wetland. Major Grading Permits require a Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPPP) a National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permit from Illinois Environmental Protection Agency (IEPA) and Notice of Intent (NOI) from IEPA.
- Minor Grading Permits are issued for projects that are not eligible for a Major Grading Permit. Minor grading permits require an erosion and sediment control plan. Erosion control plans are required to show methods to prevent erosion and soil runoff until new vegetation is established.

While the City has regulations to mitigate erosion and stormwater runoff, these regulations are limited when impervious area is not being added to the site. Based on the intent of the Zoning Ordinance, staff is proposing amendments to Title 17 and Title 18 to clarify and strengthen the tree preservation requirements. The Planning Commission shall be hearing and making a recommendation solely on the Title 17 (Zoning) amendments.

Below is a summary of our existing tree preservation ordinance:

- A tree survey is required for any new development requiring the disturbance or removal of trees. The tree survey shall identify all trees six (6) inches caliper or larger measured at diameter breast height (DBH) on the property.
- Site plans and subdivisions are required to incorporate all feasible methods to preserve all existing trees and wooded areas outside the minimum building and site development area, or within the residential tree preservation areas. Grading permits only are required to submit a tree survey.
- Trees removed within the minimum site development area are not required to be replaced. Trees under 6" caliper or in 'poor' or 'dead' condition, are not required to be replaced.
- Replacement trees are based on 1:1 caliper inch. For example, removal of 60 caliper inches of trees may be replaced on site as thirty (30) 2 inch caliper trees, sixty (60) 1 inch caliper trees, etc.

Important definitions:

Site development area: The limit of construction activity as measured two (2) feet from the edge of a residential or commercial driveway, parking lot or loading/unloading area.

Tree preservation area: This area shall apply to residential development only. It shall be a minimum of fifteen (15) feet as measured from the exterior property line of the development, encompassing the entire property.



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BACKGROUND

There are many different methods of tree preservation on public and private property in municipalities. Some communities designate between different types of trees and their characteristics, such as 'legacy' or 'grand trees' or base replacement measurements on canopy coverage versus caliper inches. Staff reviewed tree preservation ordinances in several communities in the area seeking methods to help strengthen Collinsville's ordinances. A summary of these findings is below:

Wildwood, MO—Chapter 410. Tree Preservation and Restoration Requirements

- Requires a tree preservation plan prior to issuing any grading permit, plan/plat or authorization granted by the City.
- Requires 30% of all tree canopy coverage on land not within any required building setback area to be retained and undisturbed.
- Requires cost to replace or restore trees and loss of topsoil into the bond for a grading permit.

Crestwood, MO—Chapter 26-21.5 Tree Preservation and Replacement Standards

- Tree preservation and replacement standards applies to all existing private and public properties, public rights-of-way, all vacant and undeveloped land, subdivisions, conditional use permits, site plan review, building permits and all redevelopments.
- Defines protected trees as in public rights-of-way or public property, any trees that were installed to meet landscaping or preservation requirements, and trees on private property that are DBH of eighteen (18) inches or more or is in fair condition or better. Protected trees removed are required to be replaced.
- Exempts Tree Preservation Plans (TPP) for single-family construction less than 1,000 sq. ft. or increases site coverage less than 10%.
- Requires replacement of trees in fair condition or better and specifically defines fair condition.
- Any trees removed within 12 months prior to application for site development shall all be deemed in good condition unless otherwise documents.
- Requires replacement of protected trees at ratio of 3 caliper inches for every 9 inches removed. And 1:1 ratio replacement for street trees or those in public rights-of-way.
- Provides option for payment into a City Tree Fund instead of planting replacement trees where the site is constrained at a rate of \$250 per caliper inch.

Lake St. Louis, MO—Section 425.070. Tree Protection

- Limits tree removal to no more than 70% of total tree canopy coverage on any development site except for up to 100% permitted for evidence of extreme topography, uniqueness, unusual lot shape or other circumstances.
- Tree replacements required so remaining tree canopy coverage on site equals 30% or more and provides table calculating sq. ft. of tree canopy coverage potential based on type of tree.
- Grand trees are required to be replaced if removed in addition to canopy coverage. Grand trees DBH limits based on type of tree (Hardwoods 24" DBH, softwoods 12" DBH, small trees 6" DBH)
- Tree removal requests not associated with a development proposal are required to receive approval of a major site plan.

Collinsville, IL:

- ⇒ Requires replacement trees by 1:1 caliper inch of those removed outside of minimum site development area and at least 6 inch caliper or more.
- ⇒ Currently has no mechanism to calculate replacement trees if removed prior to tree survey or development plan approval.
- ⇒ Currently does not include grading permits or other building permits to capture all potential removals.

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PROPOSED TEXT AMENDMENTS

Based on staff's research and existing ordinances, staff is proposing several amendments to the Zoning Ordinance, Section 17.080.—Landscaping, Screening and Buffering as it relates to tree preservation requirements. Below is the proposed amendments to Section 17. 080.040.—Landscape plan required. The proposed changes are to clarify the existing language that states a tree survey and tree preservation plan is required. Language in purple is proposed to be added.

Sec. 17.080.040 Landscape plan required (Title 17—Zoning)

C. In addition to the informational requirements for site improvement plans as set forth in the zoning code, landscape plans shall contain the following information:

6. Tree Survey. *A tree survey shall identify all trees six (6) inch caliper or larger measured at diameter breast height (DBH), tree diameter measure four and one-half (4.5) feet above the ground, with species, size and condition listed in table format, meeting the requirements of the City's Infrastructure Design Manual.*

7. Tree preservation plan. *The tree preservation plan shall show all existing trees and wooded areas to be preserved, all trees to be removed and replacement trees.*

Below is proposed amendments to Section 17.080.050 Tree preservation. The proposed changes clarify that grading permits require a tree survey and tree preservation plan, not just new development projects. Language in purple is proposed to be added and language with a ~~strike through~~ to be removed.

Sec. 17.080.050 Tree preservation plan (Title 17—Zoning)

B. Any grading permit per Chapter 18.04, site development plan, plat, or permit, requiring the disturbance or removal of trees, shall incorporate all feasible methods and approaches to preserve all existing trees and wooded areas outside the minimum building and site development area or within residential tree preservation areas. The following ~~replacement~~ standards shall apply:

1. *A tree survey and tree preservation plan shall be prepared meeting the requirements of Section 1.050.02. of the City's Infrastructure Design Manual and tree replacement standards of Section. 17.080.070.*
2. *Additionally, existing vegetative cover including native trees, shrubs, forbs, sedges, groundcovers, grasses, and other flora shall be preserved to the maximum extent possible during development. Such existing vegetation provides important wildlife habitat, erosion control, and visual buffers within the landscape.*
3. *The removal of trees or other vegetation within an existing underground utility easement as a part of either the maintenance or improvement of the utility line shall not be included in the mitigation plan.*

Below is proposed amendments to Section 17.080.070. Tree replacement or mitigation. The proposed changes clarify that trees in fair or better condition are required to be replaced, removes the option to replace trees off-site and instead towards a City Tree Fund and adds a separate requirement for tree replacement if trees were removed prior to any tree survey or development plan. Language in purple is proposed to be added and language with a ~~strike through~~ to be removed.

Sec. 17.080.070. Tree replacement or mitigation (Title 17—Zoning)

The replacement of trees removed shall be based on their total caliper inches. Each caliper inch removed or damaged from outside the building and site development area or from the residential tree preservation area shall be replaced according to the following conditions.

- A. *Replacement on site. For every inch of tree caliper measured six (6) inches above the ground, removed or damaged, that is of a condition fair or better as assessed by a professional arborist, the applicant shall install a replacement tree or trees measuring an equal caliper on site.*



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PROPOSED TEXT AMENDMENTS

- ~~B. Replacement on other sites. If the replacement trees cannot be provided on-site, they shall be provided off-site as follows. For every inch of tree external diameter removed or damaged, the applicant shall install two (2) inches of replacement tree caliper.~~
- B. Replacement trees shall follow Table 1; Minimum plant material size at installation and shall be no less quality species than the tree removed *with preference to native species to the region.*
- C. The total mitigation requirement shall not exceed three hundred (300) caliper inches per acre.
- D. Alternative method to determining replacement. The City may determine the total caliper inches to be replaced based on an evaluation of resource quality prepared by a qualified arborist or professional having recognized expertise in conducting a tree survey. Said evaluation shall include identification of species, caliper, condition (vigor, density, pests, extent of decay), crown integrity and spread.
- E. *Replacement of trees without a site development plan. Any trees removed from a property through a grading permit without an approved site development plan shall be replaced at three hundred (300) caliper inches per acre.*
- F. *Removal of trees prior to a tree preservation plan or site development plan. Any trees which have been removed from a property within twelve (12) months prior to application for a grading permit or site development plan or plat from the Community Development Department shall be deemed of fair or better condition and replaced at three hundred (300) caliper inches per acre, unless previous conditions can be documented by certified arborist.*
- G. *City Tree Fund. In instances where insufficient site space or other limiting factors prevents the replanting of required replacement trees, a monetary payment may be made to the City's Tree Fun in lieu of planting at a rate of one hundred and fifty dollars (\$150) per caliper inch of required tree replacement not planted.*

Summary of Substantive Amendments Proposed for Title 17: Zoning

1. Clarify what applications/permits require a tree survey and tree preservation plan.
2. Remove option to replace trees required off site at 2:1 caliper inch replacement and instead establish a City Tree Fund that allows the City to install trees in needed areas. The option to replace off site has not been used since its adoption, likely due to the doubling of required caliper inches. Staff finds the adoption of a Tree Fund with a set rate in lieu of planting s simpler for the City and developers to execute, rather than coordinating off-site installations with a 3rd party.
3. The proposed fee per caliper inch is \$150 based upon rates from local tree nurseries. Staff finds that the \$250 rate by Crestwood may be overly burdensome as their replacement rates are 1:1 caliper inch for public trees and for private trees only 18" caliper or greater are required to be replaced at a 3 to 9 ratio.
4. Establishes a method to require tree replacement when trees are cleared illegally (without appropriate permits) or through grading permits without an approved site development plan. The proposed replacement will be set to 300 caliper inches per acre (the current maximum the City will require being replaced for any development) with option to City Tree Fund or to contest that amount with adequate proof.

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PROPOSED TEXT AMENDMENTS

Staff considered the best method to capture tree replacement for projects without a site development plan or clearing without approval. The options included requiring preservation of a percentage of tree canopy inside required setback areas or a general canopy percentage requirement for undeveloped sites. Staff has concerns with the varying setback requirements based on zoning districts. For example, Fairmount Park Casino and Horse Racing owns several properties currently zoned "R-1" Single Family, with a setback requirement of 25' front and rear and 10' sides. It is expected that the properties will most likely be rezoned to commercial and developed over several years. The new commercial zoning district may have much larger required setback areas such as 50' all sides, and would have required more tree canopy preservation, potentially providing a loophole for developers to clear prior to development plans.

Another method is based on preserving a flat rate minimum percentage of canopy coverage such as Lake St. Louis at 30%. This canopy coverage would not be restricted just outside setback areas such as Wildwood, and based on the area of existing canopy of the parcel itself. This method would require restructuring the tree preservation ordinance to support tree canopy calculations.

Overall, staff finds the simplest method is to complement the existing standards and require the existing maximum replacement standard of three hundred (300) caliper inches per acre when other documentation is not provided. This will hopefully be a deterrent to unnecessarily removing tree canopy in the City and the option of paying into a City Tree Fund could permit more flexibility where appropriate.

Summary of Substantive Amendments Proposed for Title 18: Land Development

Accompanied with the Title 17 amendments are updates to Title 18 to ensure it is clear what grading permits require a tree survey and tree preservation. Current regulations do not mention any tree surveys or preservation, as it was originally presumed that all grading permits are typically accompanied by site or subdivision plans. The proposed changes to accompany any updates to Title 17 include:

- Tree survey and tree replacement will be required for Major Grading Permits and Minor Grading permits for commercial activity. Small residential projects that may trigger a minor grading permit will not require tree preservation plan or replacement.

**Amendments to Title 18 are not a part of the proposed ordinance for the Planning Commission's consideration.*



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ZONING ANALYSIS

Section 17.150.090. - Amendments to text.

When a proposed amendment would result in a change in the text of these regulations, but would not result in a change of zoning classification of any specific property, the recommendation of the Planning Commission shall contain a statement as to the nature and effect of such proposed amendment and determination as to the following items:

A. *Whether such change is consistent with the intent and purpose of these regulations.*

The proposed text amendment furthers the intent and purpose of the City's Zoning Ordinance ([Section 17.010—Title and Intent](#)), specifically:

- *To promote the health, safety, quality of life, comfort and general welfare of the City and its planning area, which includes the area within the City corporate limits and unincorporated territory lying outside the City forming the total community of which Collinsville is a part;*
- *To preserve and protect property values throughout the City and its planning area.*

Staff finds that based on the above criteria, the proposed amendments to Title 17 Zoning will further the intent of the City's Zoning Ordinance.

B. *The areas which are most likely to be directly affected by such change and in what way they will be affected.*

The proposed text amendment to Title 17 impacts all grading permits, building permits, site plans, or plats that require the clearing/removal of trees and require a tree survey and tree preservation plan and tree replacement with the exception of minor grading permits for small residential projects.

C. *Whether the proposed amendment is made necessary because of changed or changing conditions in the areas and zoning districts affected, or in the area of jurisdiction of such changed or changing conditions.*

Staff is pursuing the proposed text amendment due to recognizing a gap in the existing tree preservation ordinance and grading permit practices.

Strategic Plan Goals Achieved by the Proposed Text Amendment:

Achieve Strategic Plan Goal #1: Preserve and improve existing neighborhoods

Achieve Strategic Plan Goal #3: Encourage tourism and economic development

Achieve Strategic Plan Goal #7: Support excellent municipal services

The proposed amendment will achieve these Strategic Plan goals by updating the zoning ordinance to make more effective by clarifying what projects require a tree survey and tree preservation and strengthening the tree preservation ordinance to be more flexibility and fill in gaps based on types of clearing.

RECOMMENDATION

Staff finds that the proposed text amendments meets or exceeds the review criteria for zoning text amendments. Further, staff finds that the proposed text amendment advances the intent of the City's Zoning Ordinance. Based on these findings and research from surrounding municipalities, staff recommends **'Approval'** of Text Amendment Application TA 26-06 Tree Preservation.



EXHIBITS

A.DRAFT ORDINANCE



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EXHIBIT A: DRAFT ORDINANCE

ORDINANCE NO. _____

**AN ORDINANCE AMENDING SECTION 17.080 LANDSCAPING, SCREENING
AND BUFFERING OF TITLE 17 (ZONING)
OF THE CODE OF ORDINANCES
OF THE CITY OF COLLINSVILLE, ILLINOIS AS IT RELATES TO TREE
PRESERVATION STANDARDS**

WHEREAS, the City of Collinsville, Illinois, a home rule municipality (hereinafter the "City"), has enacted Municipal Code regulations for the purpose of improving and protecting the public health, safety, comfort, convenience, and general welfare of the people.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT ORDAINED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF COLLINSVILLE as follows:

Section 1. Section 17.080.040. Landscape plan required of Title 17 (Zoning) of the Code of Ordinances of the City of Collinsville, Illinois, shall be amended as follows:

Sec. 17.080.040.C.

"6. *Tree survey.* A tree survey shall identify all trees six (6) inch caliper or larger measured at diameter breast height (DBH), tree diameter measure four and one-half (4.5) feet above the ground, with species, size and condition listed in table format, meeting the requirements of the City's Infrastructure Design Manual.

7. *Tree preservation plan.* The tree preservation plan shall show all existing trees and wooded areas to be preserved, all trees to be removed and replacement trees."

Section 2. Section 17.080.050. Tree preservation of Title 17 (Zoning) of the Code of Ordinances of the City of Collinsville, Illinois, shall be amended as follows:

"Sec. 17.080.050. *Tree preservation plan.*

B. Any grading permit per Chapter 18.04, site development plan, plat or permit, requiring the disturbance or removal of trees, shall incorporate all feasible methods and approaches to preserve all existing trees and wooded areas outside the minimum building and site development area or within residential tree preservation areas. The following standards shall apply:

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EXHIBIT A: DRAFT ORDINANCE

1. A tree survey and tree preservation plan shall be prepared meeting the requirements of Section 1.050.02. of the City's Infrastructure Design Manual and tree replacement standards of Section. 17.080.070.
2. Additionally, existing vegetative cover including native trees, shrubs, forbs, sedges, groundcovers, grasses, and other flora shall be preserved to the maximum extent possible during development. Such existing vegetation provides important wildlife habitat, erosion control, and visual buffers within the landscape.
3. The removal of trees or other vegetation within an existing underground utility easement as a part of either the maintenance or improvement of the utility line shall not be included in the mitigation plan."

Section 3. Section 17.080.070. Tree replacement or mitigation of Title 17 (Zoning) of the Code of Ordinances of the City of Collinsville, Illinois, shall be amended as follows:

"Sec. 17.080.070. Tree replacement or mitigation.

- A. *Replacement on site.* For every inch of tree caliper measured six (6) inches above the ground, removed or damaged, that is of a condition fair or better as assessed by a professional arborist, the applicant shall install a replacement tree or trees measuring an equal caliper on site.
- B. Replacement trees shall follow Table 1; Minimum plant material size at installation and shall be no less quality species than the tree removed with preference to native species to the region.
- C. The total mitigation requirement shall not exceed three hundred (300) caliper inches per acre.
- D. *Alternative method to determining replacement.* The City may determine the total caliper inches to be replaced based on an evaluation of resource quality prepared by a qualified arborist or professional having recognized expertise in conducting a tree survey. Said evaluation shall include identification of species, caliper, condition (vigor, density, pests, extent of decay), crown integrity and spread.
- E. *Replacement of trees without a site development plan.* Any trees removed from a property through a grading permit without an approved site development plan shall be replaced at three hundred (300) caliper inches per acre.



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F. *Removal of trees prior to an approved grading permit, site development plan or plat.* Any trees which have been removed from a property within twelve (12) months prior to application for a grading permit or site development plan or plat from the Community Development Department shall be deemed of fair or better condition and replaced at three hundred (300) caliper inches per acre, unless previous conditions can be documented by certified arborist.

G. *City Tree Fund.* In instances where insufficient site space or other limiting factors prevents the replanting of required replacement trees, a monetary payment may be made to the City's Tree Fun in lieu of planting at a rate of one hundred and fifty dollars (\$150) per caliper inch of required tree replacement not planted."

Section 4. In the event any section or provision of this Ordinance shall be held unconstitutional or invalid by any Court, in whole or in part, such holding shall not affect the validity of this Ordinance or any remaining part of this Ordinance, other than the part held unconstitutional or invalid.

Section 5. All ordinances, or parts thereof, which are inconsistent with the provisions of this Ordinance, are hereby repealed to the extent of their inconsistencies.

Section 6. Nothing contained herein shall in any manner be deemed or construed to alter, modify, supersede, supplant, or otherwise nullify any other ordinance of the City or the requirements thereof whether or not relating to or in any manner connected with the subject matter hereof, unless expressly set forth herein.

Section 7. This Ordinance is effective upon its passage by the City Council, approval by the Mayor, and publication according to law.

PASSED by the City Council and Approved by the Mayor this ____ day of _____ 2026.

Ayes: _____

Nays: _____

Absent: _____