CITY OF ATLANTA

M. KASIM REED
MAYOR

ARBORIST DIVISION

DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING,
AND COMMUNITY
DEVELOPMENT

JAMES E. SHELBY
COMMISSIONER

Standard of Practice

Dead, Dying and Hazardous Tree Evaluations

Each application for dead, dying, and hazardous trees is a Request for Service. The contents of the application shall be entered into KIVA.

Each tree applied for shall be personally evaluated (unless an Emergency Tree Removal Permit is requested, in such cases photographs will suffice and field verification when practical) on site by a COA arborist. The evaluation shall be systematic and objective. The instrument used to ensure systematic evaluation shall be the City of Atlanta Tree Hazard Checklist in KIVA. The checklist shall be followed whether or not all sections apply.

- A Tree Hazard Checklist form need not be filled out if the subject tree is obviously and undeniably dead, even to an untrained observer.

- Filling out a Tree Hazard Checklist form is discretionary on a live tree with obvious defects significant enough to constitute an imminent hazard. These defects shall be documented in the Field Book, in KIVA, and on the removal permit. Photographic evidence is encouraged.

- Filling out a Tree Hazard Checklist form is encouraged but discretionary on live trees with no apparent defects.

- Filling out a Tree Hazard Checklist form is required for trees that appear to be healthy but exhibits signs of stress.

If requested, a copy of the completed checklist form shall be forwarded with the tree removal application and the arborist's decision. If an Applicant believes the arborist made an error in his/her determination, the Applicant has the right to appeal. An Appeal may be filed to the Tree Conservation Commission.

Completed permit applications, decisions, hazard checklist forms, photographs and any other relevant documents shall be attached and filed in KIVA. Hard copies of all documents shall be retained by the field arborist for a period of two years. The documents shall be stored by the City as per the City's record retention schedule.

Decision criteria

Dead trees: Skeletal remains with no live twigs; peeling bark; fungal conks on the trunk; beetle infestation; lack of foliage or total browning of foliage during growing seasons; a lack of buds and dry, brittle twigs during dormancy.

Dying trees: Fungal conks on 30% or more of root flares; tip die-back in excess of 30% of the twigs in the live crown; a preponderance of small, sparse or chloritic leaves; excessive epicormic growth; extreme mistletoe growth; three or more broken branches of 6" diameter or larger; one or more major branch or leader pull-outs; lightning strikes; topped trees; suppressed pines and other shade intolerant species; pines with inadequate taper and <15% live crowns. Decision shall be based on a cumulative evaluation of these criteria.

Hazardous trees: Fungal conks on 30% or more of root flares; root rescission on two or more root flares, with or without fungal conks; structural root plate severed; basal or trunk cavity with an opening in excess of 30% of stem circumference; canker in excess of 30% of stem circumference; three or more broken branches of 6" diameter or larger; "thin shell" hollowness in which the thickness of the 'sound' wood (t) divided by the radius (R) is less than 0.3 (t/R < 0.3) known as the t to R ratio; structural root plate that impacts a building foundation; evidence of uprooting; lean in excess of 20 degrees, measured at breast height; severely included bark (bark ridge inward) on multi-stem trees. Decision shall be based on a cumulative evaluation of these criteria. ***Hazardous, may also reflect human health considerations as determined by the Arboricultural Manager.***

Permit for tree removal based upon location to house. Sec. 158 -101 (i): One healthy tree, in five years, located within five feet (measured at the base of the tree, where the trunk meets the ground) on the side of the tree closest of the structural foundation of an existing single family residential dwelling structure or duplex, can be permitted for removal without paying recompense.