



TEXAS A&M FOREST SERVICE

Tree Preservation: How can I prevent tree removal in my neighborhood?

Learning that a favorite tree is destined for removal due to road or building construction activities can be devastating. Whether you own the tree or it belongs to someone else, there are a few things you can do that may help prevent destruction of the tree. It is unrealistic to expect the proposed construction activity to not occur, but by taking a rational approach to raising awareness of the value of the tree, the proposed construction may be altered in such a way as to preserve the tree.

Establish Value

Your tree is worth a lot. It's aesthetic benefits are unequalled. You know that intrinsically; which is why you want to save it. However, mature trees provide a lot of other benefits—even to people who don't live nearby—that can be quantified. For example, one mature tree can reduce thousands of gallons of stormwater each year through interception and uptake. This reduces the total amount of stormwater infrastructure, like pipes and retention ponds, that a city may need.

Your tree also provides significant energy savings and reduces the urban heat island effect that causes cities to maintain higher air temperatures compared to nearby rural areas.



Trees filter water and air, contributing to overall water and air quality and provide a number of social and economic benefits as well. One mature tree can increase the market value of residential real estate by as much as ten percent. Being around trees has been shown to reduce aggression and crime, improve concentration and test scores in students, and improve health and feelings of well-being. Now that's that the kind of environment most city leaders want for their communities!

To determine the actual value of many of the environmental and economic benefits your tree provides, visit the [National Tree Benefit Calculator](#) or [i-Tree Design](#).

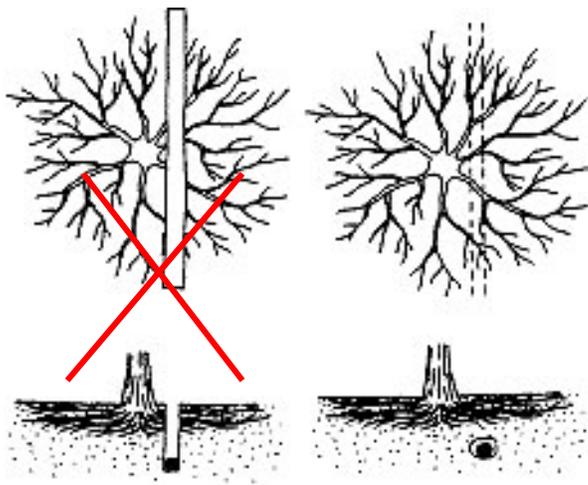
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Appraisal Value

Another way to value trees is to determine what it would cost to replace the tree if it were removed or destroyed. This is a legitimate method as you would expect recompense if road widening removed other personal property such as fencing or driveway. Seek the advice of professionals as there are guidelines for appraisal and valuation. The [International Society of Arboriculture](http://www.internationalarborsociety.org/) can help you find an arborist trained in tree appraisal.

Consider Alternatives

It isn't enough to just show your tree is valuable, there must also be a reasonable alternative to allow some form of the proposed activity to go forward. Can the road be rerouted slightly to avoid the tree? Can underground utilities be trenched beneath the roots instead of cutting through them? Can a tree well or island be incorporated into the site design? Can the tree be relocated for less than replacement cost? Arm yourself with at least one reasonable alternative, before you schedule a visit with the responsible parties.



Tunneling below grade reduces root damage

Transplanting may be a reasonable alternative

Bring Attention to Your Tree's Value

After determining alternatives and the value of the benefits your tree provides, plus the cost to replace the tree if it were destroyed, share this information with the tree owner (if they aren't aware) and with officials responsible for the proposed construction activity.

Schedule meetings with the property owners, developers, engineering or construction firms involved, city officials or other agencies involved. Provide copies of all the benefit information you have gathered. Speak at town meetings and other appropriate venues.

Invite the media to participate and send them the same set of information on benefits; they may run it as special interest story.

Attitude Helps

It may be an emotional issue for you, but attempt to keep your conversation from escalating into highly charged exchanges. You are more likely to be successful when you opponent does not feel defensive; it is after all, their legal right to perform the proposed activity. Your job is to show them how much better it is for them to keep the tree. Dedicated grassroots effort is often successful in saving trees, particularly when there are viable alternatives.

