



CITY URBAN FORESTRY POLICY & HISTORIC DISTRICTS

Public Works Department

Cultural Heritage Board

Agenda Item: 7

August 19, 2026

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BACKGROUND

- The 2024 Urban Forestry Policy Manual provides guidelines for preservation and protection of Riverside's tree heritage and urban forest.
- It supersedes the 2015 policy, applies to planting, pruning, preservation, and removal of trees in City rights-of-way, and identifies Public Works as responsible for daily urban forest management and oversight of contracted and permitted tree work.
- The City generally owns trees in parkways and rights-of-way along residential streets, while many other trees are privately owned and fall outside direct City tree-control authority



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HISTORIC DISTRICT RELEVANCE

- The Urban Forestry Policy is **NOT** a historic preservation ordinance, but several provisions affect historic districts.
- The City Emphasizes the preservation of existing trees, coordinated planning, and protections of Riverside's Tree Heritage.
- The Strategy is to preserve existing canopy, reduce developmental impacts, and promote proper tree care and service.
- The City Recognizes that some trees may have historic or cultural value beyond routine Urban Forestry Management.



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REMOVAL CONSIDERATIONS

- The City will remove hazardous, diseased, or declining City-owned trees when removals meet policy criteria.
- Hazard trees are defined as trees that are dying, dead, structurally weak, traffic obstructions, or injurious to public health, safety, or welfare
- The City documents significance, evaluates alternatives, and coordinates review before removal where a tree contributes to a recognized historic setting.



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OPERATIONAL STANDARDS

Pruning

- Street tree pruning is intended to preserve tree health, appearance, and public safety.
- Authorized work includes periodic and “as needed” pruning for utility conflicts, streetlight clearance, building interference, hazardous branches, and pedestrian or vehicular safety

Historic Character

- Mature street trees often function as contributing landscape features and should be retained where feasible.
- In historic districts, pruning standards matter because inappropriate pruning can alter canopy form, visual rhythm, and streetscape character.



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KEY TAKEAWAYS

- The Urban Forestry Policy Manual provides the City's operational framework for street tree planting, pruning, preservation, and removal.
- Historic districts are affected because street trees can contribute to neighborhood setting, visual character, and landscape integrity
- The City supports preservation, proper pruning, and review of historically sensitive trees and areas



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RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends that the Cultural Heritage Board receive and file presentation on the City Urban Forestry Policy and historic districts.



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