

TREE COMMITTEE HOA LETTER

The City of Leawood recently made changes to the ordinance pertaining to street trees. These changes can be found in the city ordinance, Chapter XIII, Article 4. Trees represent a green part of the city's infrastructure. This includes improved aesthetics leading to improved property values, reduced energy consumption, and stormwater and erosion control.

One focus of the change is regarding street trees and their relation to the curb and sidewalk, if present. Tree Lawn is the term that defines where a street tree may be located or replaced. It describes the right away area between the back of the curb to the sidewalk. When no sidewalk exists, it is the area between the back of the curb to the right away line. These changes are intended to provide a standard for street tree placement, improve driving visibility, and to decrease root damage to sidewalks and curbs. The ordinance changes define the placement or replacement regulations for street trees.

- Street trees shall be placed in a minimum 10 feet wide tree lawn.
- Street trees shall be planted a minimum of 5 feet from the curb line when no sidewalk is present.
- Trees planted in tree lawns less than 10 feet wide but greater than 7 feet wide may be replanted in the same location.
- Trees existing in tree lawns less than 7 feet wide shall not be replaced.

The new ordinance, adopted in January 2019 is not retroactive in its application. The new ordinance does not apply to trees on private streets except where public safety concerns are involved.

In addition to regulating the tree placement distance from curves, directives exist for lateral placement of trees.

- The minimum spacing for street trees shall be 30 feet for medium trees and 40 feet for large trees.
- Trees may not be planted within 35 feet of a tree corner.
- Trees may not be planted within 10 feet of a fire hydrant.
- Trees may not be planted within 20 feet for medium trees or within 30 feet for tall trees of any overhead electric distribution lines.
- Trees may not be planted in violation of any overhead transmission line utility easement.

Medium tree describes one that will have a height of 25 to 40 feet when mature. Large tree describes one that will have a height greater than 40 feet when mature.

A Tree Committee has been established to help disseminate this information to each HOA board, with plans to provide presentations to the HOA boards as they desire. This Tree Committee contains representatives from the City Council, Parks and Recreation Department, and a few private citizens. A future plan envisions advising individual homeowners to help them make decisions on their own property. The Leawood website will have an area devoted to trees, including a list of recommended trees for this area, the new tree ordinance, and commentary on the ordinance.