

Memorandum

TO: City Council Workshop
FROM: Krista Billerbeck , Natural resources manager
DATE: July 21, 2025
SUBJECT: Ash and dead tree removals on private property
ITEM NUMBER: 1.b
SECTION: GENERAL BUSINESS

REQUESTED MOTION

INTRODUCTION

The council is being asked to review and discuss a plan to require the removal of untreated ash trees and other dead trees from private property beginning in 2026.

DISCUSSION

Emerald ash borer (EAB) is an invasive beetle that infests and kills ash trees. It has been present in Shoreview for at least 14 years, first identified in Shoreview in 2011 and first detected in Minnesota in 2009. Shoreview, as with the rest of the Twin Cities Metro Area, is in an area that is considered to be generally infested with EAB according to the Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA). This means that all ash trees in this area are infested or will soon be infested with EAB unless they are being treated. Trees are killed in about three to five years. Early infestation is difficult to see and often people don't notice a problem until the tree is almost dead. Treatment with an insecticide trunk injection can be effective to prevent infestation if started early and continued on an ongoing basis. The city started a treatment program in 2012 for residents to preventively treat their trees. The city also treats trees in city parks through this program. Some residents also hire tree contractors to treat their trees, but there are numerous ash trees throughout the city that are untreated.

EAB existed in Shoreview for several years prior to it taking a noticeable toll on the community. The city removed ash trees on city property and required ash removal on private property as individual trees were dead and dying, typically on a complaint driven basis. This was initially in an effort to slow the spread of EAB as listed in city code Sec 115-53. Over time, as EAB continued to infest ash trees in the area, it was no longer possible to slow the spread. There was a shift in 2022 in the apparent level of infestation of ash trees in the city. Trees that showed low level infestations in previous years switched to showing signs and symptoms of heavy infestations. The city assessed the condition of untreated ash trees on boulevards and city property to prioritize the order of removals. The council approved a significant increase in the tree removal budget and planned for high levels of removals over the next several years. Removals on private property were no longer required due to no longer slowing the spread of the beetle and property owners were asked to plan for and remove untreated ash trees by the end of 2025.

Addressing dead and dying ash trees in 2026 looks different from the initial effort to slow the spread of EAB. Since the city is in an area that the MDA considers to be generally infested with EAB, the concern turns towards mitigating the issue of dead trees. Dead trees turn brittle and are prone to breaking. To work towards the public interest of safe public areas, the city will start a plan to require the removal of dead trees that may impact a public right of way or public property.

This plan will focus on different areas of the city over the next four years. The city will be broken up into approximately four zones and one zone will be addressed each year. Properties in a specified zone with dead trees that may impact a public right of way or public property will be sent a letter notifying them of the required tree removal to be completed in six months time along with a quote for removal from a tree contractor. Prior to sending letters to property owners, a quote for tree removal would be obtained by putting out a request for quotes to tree contractors in an effort to lower costs and facilitate the process for property owners. The property owner may choose to proceed with the provided quote or may select a licensed tree contractor of their choice. Any removals that are not completed in the six months will go to abatement. With approval of the city council, a tree contractor will be hired to complete the remaining removals and the bill will be sent to the property owner. The same process would continue in the next zone the following year.

Ash trees that don't have the potential to impact a public right of way or public property will not be required to be removed and will be treated as other tree issues involving private properties. Tree issues between private properties are civil matters between the neighbors involved.

In carrying out this plan, there will be many questions around assistance for the cost of removals. At this time there are no available grant programs or outside funding assistance for ash removals. If a grant program becomes available, city staff would seek to apply and there would be an emphasis on funds going towards lower income residents, for example households at or below 80% Area Median Income (AMI).

Another path for financial assistance is as a special assessment. For example, the City of Maplewood developed a program to help property owners finance ash tree removal costs through a special assessment to be paid over five years. The city set a maximum amount of funds for this program and used a lottery system for property owners to apply.

There will also be many questions about replanting trees after removals take place. Currently, the city encourages tree planting through a spring tree sale that offers trees at wholesale prices, and a newer special fall tree sale, that offers a limited quantity of subsidized trees. The city could consider expanding the size of the subsidized tree sale while required removals are taking place.

RECOMMENDATION

Staff asks the council discuss the proposed plan and provide direction.

ATTACHMENTS