

Urban Forest Management Plan

Policy for Expanding Width of Planter Strips to Accommodate Larger Canopy Trees

Background:

The City of Burlingame is committed to creating a larger tree canopy throughout the community and has revised the official street tree list to include only those tree species with “the tallest, most significant canopies”. In approving the revised street tree list in October of 2008, the City Council recognized that the more expansive root systems of larger-scale trees can disrupt city sidewalks. The City Council therefore directed staff to explore opportunities to widen planter strips to accommodate the root systems of the larger scale trees.

Planter Strip Policy:

Based on this direction, Parks and Recreation, Public Works, and Community Development staff have developed the following “Planter Strip Policy” to apply to the construction of new homes and additions to homes which are considered to be substantial construction as determined by the Chief Building Official:

For new homes built in Burlingame, or when substantial construction is performed on existing homes, property owners may be required to increase (maximize) the planter strip width for the purpose of accommodating root systems of large canopy trees.

Policy Guidelines:

This requirement is triggered when, during the plan check process, Public Works staff determines that the applicant’s project is subject to rehabilitating the frontage of the property including replacement of the existing sidewalk. On many residential streets in Burlingame, there is additional public right-of-way located between the existing sidewalks and the private property line. This additional right-of-way varies from street to street and ranges from no additional right-of-way to as much as five or six feet.

For projects where a new sidewalk is required, Public Works staff will also determine if there is adequate right-of-way available to reconfigure the sidewalk to allow for a wider planter strip. If there is, Parks and Recreation staff will make a determination on whether it is an appropriate situation to implement this policy.

Parks Department staff will provide comments to the applicant on the preferred method of satisfying the requirement. There are two ways that this policy requirement can be satisfied. The planter strip may be widened along the entire width of the property, or the planter strip may be widened at the location of the street tree(s) only. A photo of a planter strip widened at the location of street trees is shown below. City staff must approve the final sidewalk alignment.

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The applicant's landscape plan is required to include large canopy street trees within the planter strip. The applicant will be required to contact the Parks Division office at (650) 558-7330 to obtain an appropriate tree list and a no fee permit to plant one or more 15 gallon size trees as spacing is available, at the conclusion of the project. The tree planting requirement will become part of the "final inspection" on the project.