

HOMEOWNER ASSOCIATION TREE MAINTENANCE PLANS

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Even back in the mid-eighties, arborists and tree maintenance companies noticed that the majority of calls from Homeowner Associations were for the removal of problem trees. As a development approaches ten to fifteen years old, the trees reach maturity and often cause problems to the Association. However, removing a tree is not the only available option.

As trees mature, sap flow slows and vigor is reduced. As trees get large, there is more tissue to support. Each year new spring growth supports a larger tree, but the added leaves and trunk rings also add to its size. This cycle determines old age in a tree. Hardwoods generally keep it up longer than softwoods do. The tree must grow larger to maintain health.

There are many stresses that face our maturing trees... Ten consecutive drought years; New pests and diseases; soil grading, fill, and compaction; and 'Chain saw Blight', caused by the unskilled 'tree workers'. Deadwood in a tree will eventually fall from the canopy. Tree failures can be hazardous if there are targets under them. Roots can be very damaging to nearby driveways, sidewalks, and foundations. 1980s standards adopted (through litigation) define a 1-inch trip hazard as a liability to the association. Branches and foliage can rub and damage roofs and siding, can disrupt traffic, and conceal lamp posts.

Fortunately there are services available to correct or even prevent these problems from occurring. Proper pruning can provide clearance to the homes and direct

growth away from the conflict. Deadwood and hazardous trees can be removed. Soil can be deep root aerated and watered to compensate for compaction and put Oxygen back in the root zones. Trees can be fertilized, sprayed, and pruned to reduce pest and disease 'pressure'. Root cuts can be made, and Root Barriers installed to correct and/or prevent damage to paving.

Why go to this trouble? Trees add real, tangible value to the property. Standardized formulas are used to appraise the value of the woody plants. It is common for trees to add \$500,000 to an average sized complex property value. Tree removal is expensive and impacts the visual appearance of the property. Trees provide shade, clean air, noise reduction, and beauty to your home. Trees add to the salability of your unit or home.

How can you be sure your Tree Maintenance Plan is working for you? Your Arborist should provide a phased approach to bring the trees under control. He/she should schedule immediate need and longer term remedies to help the Board budget the expense. Your Arborist should assist you with obtaining the required City Tree Removal Permits, if applicable.

Your Arborist should be I.S.A. Certified, should follow N.A.A. pruning standards, and be fully insured. You should request current Insurance Certificates on Workers Compensation, Liability, and all vehicles. The Arborist must hold any required licensing in the local state or municipality. Naturally, these items all impact the cost proposal, but they can protect the Association from lost trees, damaged trees, or any accident that may occur due to poor or lack of tree maintenance.

Our Urban Forest is shrinking in both numbers and size. With a little care the trees can be preserved. With the proper attention, a skilled Arborist can help you develop the plan that will apply precious budget dollars towards keeping those trees, and not removing them.

by Steve Andrews, Certified and licensed Arborist in the State of California (1986)

Edited in 2007 for Nevada residents by Don Barry AMS PCAM RS