

COBURG COMMUNITY EDUCATION ARTICLE

Managing Our Historic Trees in Coburg

From the desk of Brian Harmon
City of Coburg Public Works Director



More information:

We ran this informational article earlier this year in an issue of Our Town, our quarterly newsletter.

Given the questions that have been raised regarding the historic tree on Pearl Street we feel it is relevant to put this information out to you again. It has been updated with new information.

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I wanted to take this opportunity to reach out to Coburg citizens regarding our historic trees. In Coburg we have approximately 350 trees that the City maintains — of which two thirds are Big Leaf Maples. A Big Leaf Maple can live to be 200 years old and most of the Maples in Coburg are at the end of that life cycle.

Around the time of the Columbus Day Storm of 1962, as the story is told, many of the Maples were heavily damaged. In a good faith effort, the citizens of Coburg took it upon themselves to clean up the trees and “trim them.” While these efforts had the best of intentions, this was not necessarily the healthiest solution for the trees. This caused several – if not all – of these

trees to be opened up in the center to different diseases. You can still see how the trees were topped and the long-term effects of that trimming.

The cost of maintaining these trees is expensive and the available budget for that maintenance is limited. More important than monetary concern is the safety of our citizens. The memory of the car smashed flat in the Dari Mart parking lot last year left many concerned and well aware of the danger of old and diseased trees.

On Father’s Day, a tree in the front yard of a local family fell very close to their home. This tree caused damage to vehicles, as well as a small amount to their home. The



A near-miss treefall on Skinner.



follow-up investigation found serious rot in the trunk of the tree. This supports our arborist's reports regarding the health of our Big Leaf Maples.

Every year, the Public Works crew cleans up and removes debris from the trees that loose limbs and branches. They work very closely with arborists to analyze the health of each tree that a customer raises concern about. In the last two years, Public Works has spent many long hours and most of the budgeted dollars on storm clean ups. One storm event cost approximately \$15,000 for the cleanup effort.

“There are many tough choices that Public Works has to make on a daily basis.”

The majority of those choices have to do with quality of life and health of our citizens. One of those choices is whether a tree gets to stay and be trimmed, or if the tree needs to be removed. We consider the cost of trimming compared to cost of removal. Factors that go into these types of choices are danger level, health of the tree, and life cycle.

If a tree is removed, the City always replants a tree. Often times the tree is not replaced in the same spot, but

rather somewhere inside the City that works for the tree and the public. We use a Street Tree list from the City of Eugene that recommends trees that have low impact on sidewalks, streets, and infrastructure in the ground.

Coburg is an official “Tree City” and at the City we take that title very seriously. Beautiful trees enhance our community and contribute to a healthier environment for us all to live in.

In the next few months, we will be asking for your input regarding the solution to managing Coburg's historic trees. We hope that you will thoughtfully contribute your ideas and concerns.



2018 Arbor Day planting.

Update to the original article:

In the near future, the tree in the Dari Mart parking lot will be removed. This tree has been deemed hazardous and a danger to citizens. The tree on Pearl Street in front of the new development is #1 on the Hazardous Tree list. The cost for the City to remove it is estimated at somewhere upwards of \$15,000. This is more than the city collects in any given year from the Street Tree fee. The developer will remove the tree and plant several new trees along the street. This follows the City's policy of replacing trees removed.

Management of our trees continues to be daily worry of our Public Works Director. He cares about the historic trees as much as our citizens do. However, he is also aware that citizen safety must come first. Therefore, there will be times when he has to make a decision regarding a danger tree that might be unpopular to some. He makes them only after consulting with professional arborists while considering the budget available for this work.

We encourage citizens to share their questions and concerns with the City staff on this topic.

