

A few years ago in Safety Harbor the community gathered together and protested to save trees. A tree ordinance was established, with a promise that the ordinance would become more substantial soon. That has not happened and it has made a number of residents unhappy and worried for the future of the trees in their hometown. In Safety Harbor, The streets are lined with some of the oldest trees in the region, hundreds of trees older than our town. Our City Arborist Art Finn is currently working on a map with all the downtown Century trees. But, it seems like everyday more and more of these century trees are being cut down. Almost 200 large healthy trees were cut down last year alone It appears that currently the city has nothing they can legally do to stop the healthy trees from being cut down. It is time that the city looks towards creating a tree preservation ordinance and removing the guideline that any tree is removable for construction.

History

In 2016, the City Commission adopted a tree ordinance. But it allows trees to be removed for many reasons, from dangerous limbs to disease, but it also includes construction, which I feel that now it should be revised.

Current tree ordinance

<http://cityofsafetyharbor.com/DocumentCenter/View/9825/Tree-Protection-and-Preservation?bidId=>

<http://cityofsafetyharbor.com/DocumentCenter/View/5389/10-31-14---Tree-Ordinance-00946736?bidId=>

Why do we need an ordinance?

The aim of creating a tree protection and Preservation ordinance is to fix a problem that we have locally of cutting down our large trees, thus reducing our tree canopy. This ordinance establishes direct protections for specific trees on commercial, residential and public properties and it will also create local guidelines and the ability of enforcement of violations. Trees are a vital part of our existence and we need a healthy tree canopy. Having a healthy tree canopy helps to maintain the health of our residents by continuing to provide decent air quality needed for quality human life. In protecting the character and history of Safety Harbor, keeping our established tree canopy benefits all of us. Large trees provide the community with many benefits, which include increased property values and aesthetics, storing stormwater, providing a habitat for wildlife, preventing erosion and cooling which reduces energy costs and our carbon footprint. These are economic benefits to the city. Creating one of the regions

first local tree protection ordinances will allow us to lead the way, encouraging other local governments to do the same.

Why is it important ?

If you look at the big picture, not only a local perspective but also in a global sense, we need to look at the negative impact of cutting down the large trees, usually older than ourselves and sometimes older than the town we live in. But somehow we justify cutting down even our Century Trees, or trees over 100 years old. We have many if you take notice, but for how much longer? A community with beautiful and well maintained trees does not happen by accident. It is a decision to establish a set of guidelines, management practices, rules and regulations in an ordinance and is a key to success in maintaining tree coverage.

A need to understand - a disconnect to the big picture

Some people think that we actually don't need trees, that they are hazardous, with unrealized fear of falling limbs and leaves scattered on the ground, or the feeling that their personal property rights to develop the land, extend past our global right for clean air. Safety Harbor continues to experience rapid population growth. With the increasing development pressures on its communities we are destroying the urban forests in the process.

What will a tree ordinance do?

A preservation ordinance will do many beneficial things. It will preserve the urban forest, ensure the preservation of trees whose h preservation by adopting a ordinance increasing canopy protection and mitigation requirements throughout the City.

Regulations were intended to balance the desire for environmental sustainability

Methods-Should the city ask for public input?

Results-

What happens when a city makes a tree ordinance? Trees are protected.

Discussion- Speakers? Experts? Agree with each other or disagree? State findings?

What does it mean, impact

Personal Impact- Speak directly to reader

Alternative options- If you dont have trees you dont have clean air

Any Cautions? Trees that are unhealthy or hazardous will be permitted for removal.

Determination - By addressing the issues of cutting down our century trees, we will have a large, growing tree canopy and it will leave us with cleaner air, more shade, less flooding and a beautiful environment.

What will happen in the future? Together if we all think this is an important issue, individuals and businesses can work together to be the leaders in our local community. In order to... we need to do.....maintain and grow the existing tree canopy

Current Code

The purpose of Sections 153.00 through 153.10 is to establish regulations in the City that will have the effect of protecting, promoting and maintaining a healthy, diverse and mature canopy of native and naturalized hardwood and evergreen tree species. Trees preserve the ecological balance of the environment, control erosion, sedimentation and stormwater runoff, provide shade, reduce heat and glare, reduce flooding, enhance property values and aesthetics, abate noise pollution, and buffer incompatible land uses.

Create code for native tree protection

The need to create a code for the local tree population is important. It should cover residential single family, multi family, public and commercial property, so it covers all trees within the city limits

specimen and native trees that meet the criteria of being over 24” or over 50 years old will be covered. No protected tree shall be intentionally removed, destroyed, or disturbed without the written consent of the city arborist in the form of an approved tree conservation plan, tree disturbance permit, tree removal permit or tree information permit. The city will create a tree advisory board.

The following are prohibited acts under this chapter unless expressly exempted:

A. Landmark Tree. To prune, injure, or to remove without a permit, a landmark tree located anywhere in the city.

B. Native Tree. To injure, or to remove without a permit, any native tree located in the established front yard, required side yard, established corner yard, or required rear yard of all property located in a single-family residential or RM-12 multifamily residential zone, and in all areas of all other zoning district anywhere in the city.

City Wide

*A goal amount of 25 percent tree canopy coverage, 45 percent in parks and public spaces and parking lots

*No new building, parking lots or trenching within 35’ of grand oaks trunk respecting the health of rootball of the tree, giving a 35 ft space for critical root zone. Permeable pavement utilized when appropriate.

- * Any permit or approval will be required which will result in injury to or removal of a mature, landmark tree

- *Removal of public protected trees shall require approval required by commission

- *create a 50-foot setback around wetlands

- *the city will make an effort to trim dead limbs instead of remove entire tree, if that tree is the only tree in the area that provides shade

Arborist responsibilities

- *The City Arborist should have the flexibility to protect healthy trees from being clear cut to the ground and make determinations on the future of the trees.

- *The City Arborist will maintain a comprehensive inventory of protected century trees

- *The City Arborist should have the flexibility to protect healthy trees from being clear cut to the ground. Make determinations

- *City Arborist can take up to 10% of land when a healthy tree over the estimated age of 100 years if on the property, especially when it is near the perimeter. Limits of disturbance: areas where trees, vegetation, and soils are to be protected and preserved and areas where trees, vegetation, and soils are to be removed or modified. This includes indicating proposed grading, utilities, and improvements as well as access, staging, and storage areas. The plan shall graphically identify each tree to be saved or removed. A minimum of 10 percent of the total land area of the development shall be devoted to greenspace

- *Any person or city agency may propose to the historic preservation commission that a tree meets the criteria. The city arborist will hold the responsibility to inspect and grant approval of status.

- * City Arborist has the authority to grant or deny request to permit tree removal

Residential Property

- *If multiple trees are on the property that are requesting to be taken down. If over 60% of trees are saved, than fees waived.

- *Applicant investigated and submitted alternative site designs and building footprints for inspection and review of the city arborist and approval of city commission

- *Where a property owner wishes to remove a tree protected under this ordinance must be evaluated by the city arborist and then approved by the commission

- *any person who wishes to trim a protected tree on an adjoining property, the process remains the same.

When requesting to remove a landmark-eligible, century, grandfather, native or specimen tree protected under this chapter shall be denied unless one of the following findings is made

Tree is a hazard

Tree is unhealthy

When site removal of protected tree is approved, the developer may request the following

Planting a replacement of equaling 50% of total inches of tree removed. A 24 inch diameter tree measured at Caliper, is removed, than 12” of tree must be planted within 6 months. Caliper: The diameter measurement of a tree’s trunk taken six (6) inches above the ground for trees up to and including four (4) inches caliper size, and twelve (12) inches above the ground for trees exceeding four (4) inches caliper size.

To pay a fee instead of planting on site at \$100 per diameter inch up to \$10,000. If tree is removed or pruned to the detriment of tree without approval, fine will be automatically billed at maximum.

Any person aggrieved by a decision may appeal to the city manager and request a public hearing

Recommended Categories

Native

Grand

Specimen

Request to establish a Tree preservation committee that will meet and review all request for removal, trimming or establishing of any of the trees protected in this ordinance and give their recommendations to the City Commission.