

# Tree Maintenance, Replacement, and Urban Forestry Management Ordinance

City of Commerce City, Colorado

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## Section 1. Findings and Purpose

### Findings

City Council finds that:

- Trees provide critical public benefits including shade, heat reduction, stormwater interception, air quality improvement, and public health benefits;
- Commerce City has relatively low tree canopy coverage and faces high risk of canopy loss due to semi-arid conditions and maintenance failures;
- Tree loss after development reduces long-term environmental and community benefits;
- Improper maintenance and lack of watering are leading causes of premature tree mortality;
- A structured urban forestry program is necessary to ensure long-term canopy stability and accountability.

### Purpose

This Ordinance is intended to:

- Establish standards for ongoing tree maintenance and replacement after development;
- Ensure long-term survival of trees on managed lands;
- Create accountability for metro districts, HOAs, and City operations;
- Establish a professional urban forestry management framework;
- Support increased tree canopy and environmental resilience.

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## Section 2. Definitions

**Tree** means any woody perennial plant with a defined trunk or trunks, regardless of DBH.

**DBH** means diameter at breast height (4.5 feet above ground).

**Managed Property** includes:

- City-owned property;
- Public rights-of-way and easements;
- Property maintained by metro districts or HOAs.

**Regulated Tree** means any Tree located on Managed Property.

**Certified Arborist** means an individual with current ISA certification.

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## Section 3. Applicability

This Ordinance applies only to Regulated Trees on Managed Property.

This Ordinance does not apply to:

- Individual single-family residential lots not managed by HOAs/metros;
  - Trees regulated during development approvals.
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## Section 4. Tree Care Standards

All tree care shall follow ANSI A300 standards.

All tree work must be performed by or under supervision of a Certified Arborist.

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## Section 4A. City Forester

The City shall designate a City Forester.

The City Forester must hold ISA Certified Arborist credentials.

Responsibilities include:

- Enforcement of this ordinance
- Approval of removals and replacements
- Maintaining species lists
- Oversight and inspections
- Data tracking and reporting

The City Forester may approve modifications or alternatives to requirements where appropriate.

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## **Section 5. Replacement Requirements**

All tree removals require replacement based on DBH equivalency.

Total DBH removed must equal total DBH planted.

Minimum replacement size: 2-inch caliper.

Example: 20" tree = ten (10) 2" trees.

Replacement is required for all removals, including dead or hazardous trees.

The City Forester may approve alternatives including:

- Off-site planting
  - Mitigation payments
  - Phased replacement
  - Complete exemption
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## **Section 6. Watering and Maintenance**

All replacement trees must be maintained for two growing seasons.

### **Winter Watering (Required)**

- Applies from irrigation shutdown to startup
- 10 gallons per inch of caliper per month for trees  $\leq 4$ " caliper
- Adjusted for precipitation
- Must use slow-release watering methods

Failure to maintain trees resulting in death triggers replacement requirements.

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## **Section 7. Reporting Requirements**

### **Metro Districts**

Must submit annual reports including:

- Trees removed (DBH + location)
- Trees planted
- Maintenance practices

### **HOAs (250+ Units)**

Same reporting requirements apply.

Reports must be certified by a Certified Arborist.

Failure to report constitutes a violation.

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## **Section 8. Enforcement**

Violations may result in: 1. Notice of violation 2. Required corrective action 3. Fines or mitigation payments 4. City remediation with cost recovery

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## **Section 9. Administration**

The City Forester may issue administrative rules and guidance.

All decisions shall be documented in writing.