

CITY OF MENDTOA HEIGHTS
ASH TREE MANGEMENT POLICY

October 10, 2017

I. INTRODUCTION

The Emerald Ash Borer (EAB) is a non-native insect that was introduced to North America from Asia. It was discovered in the Detroit, Michigan / Windsor, Ontario area in 2002 and probably arrived in wood packing materials on cargo ships or airplanes. Despite eradication and suppression efforts, EAB has killed over 20 million Ash trees in Michigan, Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Maryland and Ontario. EAB is a beetle that is smaller than a dime. The adult does very little damage. However, this is not the case with the larvae (immature stage) that feed on the inner bark of Ash trees. This feeding disrupts the tree's ability to transport water and nutrients. Larval feeding takes place over a period of years and eventually kills the infested tree. All species of Ash are susceptible. Because EAB is hard to detect, it can be present for years before an infestation is confirmed. There are currently no known natural control measures for EAB. This means that it has the potential of killing all of Ash trees throughout the United States and Canada. EAB was first discovered in Minnesota on May 13, 2009 (est. infestation of 2005) in the City of Saint Paul and has since spread throughout Ramsey, Hennepin, and Dakota Counties. Mendota Heights has over 700 Ash trees throughout boulevards and the park system. There is also a large amount of Ash trees found on private property.

Removing and replanting Ash trees will be a tremendous physical and financial challenge for the City and private property owners. Utilizing a simple formula for removals, stumping and replanting, a cost estimate can be determined. For example, consider an average removal cost of \$250, (disposal, stump removal, and restoration) and an average replanting cost of \$200. At these rates, the economic impact of losing the 700 boulevard and park trees would be about \$315,000.

The most critical period for movement of confirmed EAB Ash trees is the months of May - July. This is the period where adult beetles emerge from trees, begin feeding on foliage, move to even more trees, and lay their eggs. During this period, it is best to leave these trees standing and not chance the possible spread of EAB by transporting beetle infested wood to other areas. After this period, from about August 1st to April 30th each year, EAB trees can be removed and transported so long as they are promptly chipped to the required dimensions, less than 1"x1"x1" in any one dimension, effectively killing any EAB larvae.

II. OBJECTIVE

The City will take a proactive approach to mitigate the spread of Emerald Ash Borer and spread the physical and fiscal costs associated with the outbreak of Emerald Ash Borer over an extended timeframe. The loss of ash trees in Mendota Heights will have a

devastating effect on home values, quality of life and the environment. Our goal is to buffer that impact by implementing current best management activities.

The goal of the EAB Management Plan should be to replant a new tree for every Ash tree lost. However, if EAB spreads rapidly and funding does not keep pace, the concern is replanting could fall far behind the number of trees removed. All the more important that both residents and officials understand the many benefits that trees provide and the financial as well as environmental impact that will occur if we do not maintain adequate reforestation as part of the program.

III. ASH TREE INVENTORY ESTABLISHED

In August of 2015, The City completed an inventory of ash trees on property which is owned by the City. These include ash trees in developed street Right-of-Way as well as ash trees located within City owned park property. The inventory found more than 600 ash trees on City Rights-of-Way, and an additional approximately 70 ash trees in the City's parks.

IV. ASH TREES IN DEVELOPED CITY RIGHT-OF-WAY (BOULEVARD TREES)

To be consistent with past practices for tree removal within developed right-of-way (boulevard trees), the City will remove ash trees within the boulevards as they show signs of decline or die for any reason (EAB-related or not). These trees will not be replaced by the City. If adjoining property owners wish to replace the removed tree, they are free to do so by planting a replacement tree on the private side of the right-of-way line. The City will permit residents to chemically treat an ash tree in the public right-of-way under the conditions of hiring a licensed tree service that is bonded and insured, and that is a State of Minnesota Licensed Commercial Pesticide Applicator using state approved trunk injection pesticides only. By using trunk injections hopefully this reduces pesticide exposure to others and the environment overall. (Note: Chemical treatment would not preclude future removal of said Ash tree if deemed necessary).

The City will begin to remove up to 10% of Ash trees each year beginning with poor and fair quality trees, hiring a contractor for larger trees. The removal shall include the complete removal of the tree, stump and ground restoration. All costs will be borne by the City of Mendota Heights.

V. ASH TREES ON CITY OWNED PROPERTY (INCLUDING PARKS)

Ash trees located on City owned property (including established parks) will be managed similarly to boulevard trees, except that ash trees located within the City parks will be evaluated for replacement on a tree-by-tree basis. Those trees deemed valuable to the park will be replaced with a non-ash species of tree in accordance with Section VI, as funding permits.

Ash trees in wooded areas will be left alone – unless by a bike path or structure and may cause harm if it falls. If it is an early EAB infestation we will be removing infested trees as needed to slow the spread to the community.

The City should consider pesticide use for EAB on public trees to reduce beetle populations in known infested areas, rather than for the purpose of preserving Ash trees for the long-term. The City would select trees for treatment that meet certain criteria as candidates that would be kept in the landscape for the long term. For a chosen tree's survivability, treatments must be repeated at regular intervals (every 2-3 years) for the life time of the tree, creating an ongoing, ever-increasing expense to the City, both in number of trees treated and the cumulative amount of pesticide needed per tree. One advantage of the treatment program is that in treating select Ash trees, the City will continue to derive the many environmental and social benefits of large canopy shade trees while reforestation efforts take hold. Although concerns exist over use of pesticides, arguably, an equal environmental impact exists for the potential benefits lost that are provided by large canopy shade trees.

If a treatment program is chosen, staff recommends use of the insecticide, TREE-äge®/active ingredient emamectin benzoate, administered through trunk injection (versus soil drenches or other methods). Injecting the chemical directly into the tree is meant to reduce exposure of pesticide to other non-targets. Further, the chemical emamectin benzoate is not a neonicotinoid-based chemical which has come under increased scrutiny for the possible decline in bees. All treated trees would have an aluminum tag attached to them with the most recent year of treatment, e.g., "EAB 2017".

VI. SPECIATION DIVERSITY

To prevent, or minimize the potential for future spread of disease or parasites among tree species, the City will strive to the maximum extent practicable not to plant trees of the same species within the same City-owned property (including parks). By varying the speciation of trees, it becomes less likely that a parasitic-born disease will migrate from tree to tree and impact all the tree coverage on a given piece of property. We should strive for a tree diversity of no more than 10-12% of any given species on public land and ROW.

VII. ASH TREES ON PRIVATE PROPERTY

No reliable inventory exists for Ash trees on private property and densities vary by neighborhood. The City will not require any actions of residents for the management of privately owned ash trees beyond what is already adopted in City Code, residents are urged to monitor for EAB. Management of privately owned ash trees shall be considered the same as any other privately owned landscape management. The City will not inspect, treat or dispose of any trees found on private property but will provide contacts and information about ash tree management and the EAB from the Minnesota Department of Agriculture to residents upon request. The City may consider a future tree sale program offering a variation of diversity to assist residents in purchasing replacement trees.

VIII. POLICY INFORMATION

Information regarding the City's Ash Tree Management Policy will be included on the City's website. An annual article will be placed in the City's newsletter, the Heights Highlights. Contact information for the City will be provided.