
PRESS RELEASE

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TREE PROTECTION PLANS SAVE TREES, TIME, MONEY; COLLIER DEVELOPS STREET OF DREAMS TREE PROTECTION PLAN

It's not easy being green, laments Sesame Street's Kermit the Frog.

And while Kermit may be right in some respects, it's easier and cheaper—and maybe even mandated—to be green these days when it comes to trees on residential or commercial development land, says Terrill Collier, current president of the Northwest chapter of the International Society of Arboriculture (PNWISA).

Thinking green when it comes to trees can save builders and developers delays, headaches and money in the current climate, which has many municipalities encouraging or requiring involvement of a qualified arborist as part of the development team.

“In terms of trees, it's the old cliché: an ounce of prevention is indeed worth a pound of cure,” says Collier, whose Collier Arbor Care is developing the Tree Protection Plan for Atherton Heights in Lake Oswego, site of next year's Home Builders of Metropolitan Portland Street of Dreams.

That plan is required by the City of Lake Oswego, just one of the metropolitan area communities requiring, recommending or considering ordinances which require preservation of existing trees in commercial or residential developments, sometimes as small as a single house.

“An arborist guides the developer. He develops a plan to clear diseased or dead trees and save healthy specimens, consistent with the goals of the developer,” Collier says.

Dennis Derby, whose Double D development is responsible for readying the Atherton Heights site, treats mature trees as an asset which “add value to a residential development. It's fairly expensive to remove trees. If you can save some special trees by protecting them during the construction process, they are a long term asset on the property,” he said, pointing out that mature trees left at this year's Street of Dreams gave it grove-like ambiance, adding substantial value to the site.

Furthermore, it can be expensive to “clear cut” property, points out Collier.

Where tree protection is mandated, Collier said builders can be red tagged, perhaps costing fines and slowing construction. Removed trees may have to be replaced, a costly process. “I've seen several developments where landscaping was way over budget because they didn't plan up front,” Collier said.

Derby recommended early involvement of an arborist because “it's a pretty specialized field... knowing species and treatments. You get a better protection package than you'd have without one.”

At Atherton Heights, for example, Collier has identified 36 trees to be preserved, including a large Oregon White Oak, 20 Douglas firs, a hawthorn and 14 Norway maples. He is recommending removal of nine Douglas firs “due to unavoidable construction conflicts.”

Prior to any work on site, Collier will meet with the Atherton Heights building contractors and all sub contractors involved with site work near trees to be saved and review work procedures, access

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and haul routes and tree protection measures. He also will consult throughout the construction period.

Retaining trees isn't the same as protecting them, Collier points out, so chain link fences will protect trees and their critical root zone throughout construction.

"The most common mistake is ignorance. Many people don't understand that most trees' roots are within three feet of the surface in a pancake shape out or well a little beyond the tree's drip line," he says.

Trenching for utilities can cut roots which feed trees and anchor them in windstorms. As little as six inches of soil fill while raising grades can smother roots. Lowering grades results in removal of roots.

Saving trees in groves is among the best tree preservation techniques. Trees in groves protect each other from fall wind storms. Trees left after thinning may well not have the root structure to withstand a good blow, says Collier.

While saving individual trees is more difficult than saving them in groves, appropriate trimming of an individual tree can make it less likely to blow down in a wind storm.

Arborists often are called to inspect sick trees which seemed perfectly healthy when the developer or builder left the project. "We find roots have been cut or smothered, and often it's too late to save the tree...or it blows over onto a building. Any of these situations can lead to law suits," Collier warns.

Metro's urban growth boundary has put a premium on developable space and on being green. These apparently conflicting goals do make being green more complicated...giving another meaning to Kermit's lament.

"Because of the new density requirements, trees inside the urban growth boundary have become sacrificial landscaping, to some extent," says Derby.

While trees need to be protected, Derby argues developers must be able to remove them when necessary to meet density requirements. Still, "by doing it right, we can make it work. In most cases we can have both," he says.

Derby's "doing it right" speaks directly to another of Collier's major points.

Most governmentally mandated programs require a certified or qualified arborist. "There's a difference even among certified arborists. Some are qualified to do tree preservation some aren't. Being certified is the minimum requirement. You should ask about the length of time in business and experience with tree preservation projects," says Collier.

For a list of consulting arborist, Collier recommends the PNWISA web site

So, perhaps Kermit is partially right when he says it's not easy to be green. Today, it may be a little easier to be green, but it certainly is more complicated.



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