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Rochester Neighborhood Tree Watch

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Condition Rating

Monitoring the condition of trees in our neighborhood right of way can not only help improve the health of individual trees, but also improve the safety and aesthetics of the city of Rochester. This guide is for helping with what to identify and report on public trees. When assessing the trees within our neighborhood, it is important for look for a few key characteristics:

Canopy

- Deadwood 3" or greater
  Dead branches can be brittle, unpredictable, and no longer able to flexibly bend like a normal tree. This can come as 'stag heading' where an entire main branch is dead and now protrudes beyond the crown or 'tip dieback' where only the very tops of the branches are

Figure 1. Example of Stag Heading
Stag Oak, *October 2009*- By: Simon Carey

Figure 2. Example of Tip Dieback
White Oak, By: Steven Katovich (USDA Forest

dead. It may be difficult to tell the diameter of the branches you are looking at, but use your best judgement.

- Hangers 3" or greater
  This refers to dead braches that have snapped off their base and are now handing in the tree or fallen to the ground. These pose as a safety hazard because they could fall with even the slightest gust of wind.

- Low canopy
  Low-hanging branches can result in a reduction in road and sidewalk visibility, thus it is an important factor to monitor when keeping our neighborhoods safe.
  Please report limbs that are impeding the use of a sidewalk, blocking a STOP sign or causing safety concerns.

Figure 3. Example of pruning low-hanging branches
By: Janet Macunovich & Steven Nikkila http://www.gardenatoz.com

- Touching power lines
  It is important for both the tree and the surrounding neighborhood to prune branches touching or resting on power lines. It could lead to power outages and possible dieback of the tree.

Figure 4. Branches touching power line
From: photos-public-domain.com

- >50% dieback
  If there is more than 50% of the tree canopy that is dead, it could be due to damage to the root system or trunk or disease, thus becoming possibly unstable. Concerning disease, early detection could help the parks department take proactive actions to eliminate the health risk of surrounding trees. Please note that all public ash trees are inspected annually and are closely monitored.

- Young trees wilting
  With the help of partners we plant hundreds of trees a year. The first 2-3 years after planting are critical to getting enough water intake. This can often be hard to determine. In fact, many tree species such as Ohio buckeye are susceptible to leaf wilt (especially in the summer). Leaves can simply shrivel up or have discoloration because they are overheating. Young trees are prone to wilting if they are freshly planted due to transplant shock. The easy fix for this is just to make sure they are getting enough water!

Trunk

Figure 5. Example of "V" union
From: WikiCommons

- Included Bark (>6" diameter)
  This refers to when the trunk breaks off into two branches. Where the two branches meet is called a union. If the junction of the two branches forms a "V" shape instead of a "U", then it is considered included bark. As the tree grows older, there is more stress on the union of branches, and they can become prone to snapping.

- Decay/Crack/Missing Bark
  As you would assume, these can indicate internal rotting or vulnerable locations on a tree for disease and other factors to infiltrate.

- Splitting Tree
  This can often occur after a storm moves through the area possibly from strong winds or lightning. If it is an emergency, please immediately contact our Parks and Rec Department (507-328-2515) so we can remove/ prune the limb/tree in question.

- Cankers/Galls/Burls

Galls are created by pests and pathogens which results in any unusual growth on the tree. They can be identified by their unusual shape and discoloration, and sometimes can girdle the tree enough to cause dieback. Cankers are caused by fungal and plant pathogens which infects the sapwood causing discoloration, cracking, or blistering on the bark. Often, these do not affect the overall health of the tree, only in extreme cases. Look to report excessively large burls or a prolific case of cankers.

Figure 6. Example of tree gall

Figure 7. Example of tree canker

- Mushrooms
  Fungi can start to grow on trees when there is an open wound caused by lightning, improper pruning, fire, construction, etc. These mushrooms can then enter the tree, grow, and cause heart decay within the tree itself. These are often an indicator of decay at the tree part that the mushroom is present.

- Girdling Roots
  This can be caused by improper planting techniques which can cause the roots to grow around the tree instead of out. Eventually, this can decrease water and nutrient transfer efficiency in the tree. This is commonly seen in town on maple trees in the boulevard.

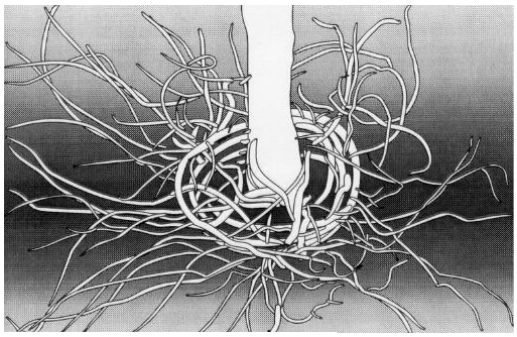

Figure 8. Example of root girdling
From: bugwoodcloud.org

Other

- Sightline Issue
  Things to consider in this category is blocking sidewalks, roads, garbage truck routes, and road signs.
- Stakes Need to be Removed
  Typically trees only need stakes for the first growing season to develop a sturdy root system. If the stakes are kept in longer, there is the potential that the wires can cut off tree circulation or encourage the tree to grow in a manner where it cannot support itself. A good way to test this is to shake the tree trunk and watch for movement in the root ball.