



CITY OF RAHWAY TREE POLICY

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RAHWAY: A TREE CITY USA COMMUNITY

Since 1997, Rahway is proud to be a Tree City USA community. Tree City USA is a tree planting and tree care program sponsored by the Arbor Day Foundation for cities and towns in the United States.

To qualify for Tree City USA, a town or city must meet four standards established by the National Arbor Day Foundation (NADF) and the National Association of State Foresters.

1. It must establish a Tree Board or Department run by a professional forester or arborist, an entire forestry department, or a volunteer tree board that must be legally responsible for the care and management of the community's trees.
2. It must pass a Tree Care Ordinance that designates the establishment of a tree board or forestry department and give this body the responsibility for writing and implementing an annual community forestry work plan. Beyond that, the ordinance should be flexible enough to fit the needs and circumstances of the particular community. A tree ordinance provides an opportunity to set good policy and back it with the force of law when necessary. Ideally, it will provide clear guidance for planting, maintaining and removing trees from streets, parks and other public places.
3. It must establish a community forestry program with an annual budget of at least \$2 per capita with evidence that the community has established a community forestry program that is supported by that annual budget.
4. It must organize an Arbor Day observance and proclamation with a simple tree planting event or an award ceremony that honors leading tree planters.

Benefits include:

1. Improved Public Image

National Arbor Day Foundation states that a community's public image is enhanced by being a Tree City USA and that it makes the community a better place to live and helps attract and keep or conduct business. Further, the Tree City USA signs at community entrances tell visitors that the city or town cares about its environment. They state that it also is an indication to prospective businesses that the quality of life may be better because of trees. It has even been known to be a factor in where meetings or conferences have been held.

2. Community Pride

NADF states that that by gaining and retaining Tree City USA recognition, it rewards the tree workers, managers, volunteers, tree board members, and others who work on behalf of better care of a community's trees. Non-involved citizens, too, often share a sense of pride that theirs is a Tree City USA. This may translate to better care of trees on private property or a willingness to volunteer in the future.

3. Financial Assistance

NADF states preference is sometimes given to Tree City USA communities over other communities when allocations of grant money are made for trees or forestry programs. The reason is that there are invariably more requests than available funds when grants are available through state or federal agencies. If requests are equally worthy, some officials tend to have more confidence in communities that have demonstrated the foresight of becoming a Tree City USA.

4. Publicity

NADF states that presentation of the Tree City USA award and the celebration of Arbor Day offer excellent publicity opportunities and this results in satisfaction for the individuals involved and their families, but also provides one more way to reach large numbers of people with information about tree care.

[Find out more by clicking here.](#)

CITY OF RAHWAY TREE REMOVAL POLICY

It is the policy of the City to protect all public trees from needless removal and every effort is made to preserve and protect public trees until such time removal is warranted and prudent.

IMPORTANT - This program policy is intended for general tree removal consideration, and not municipal capital improvement projects.

There are various reasons why trees need to be removed in an urban area and City staff evaluates each tree considered for removal on a case-by-case basis. When trees are in a state of decline and must be replaced based on the specific criteria, the City will implement a systematic and proactive replacement program that assures a variation in the ages and an optimum diversity of tree species. The criteria listed on the attached City of Rahway Tree Removal Criteria form are used when evaluating trees for possible removal.

Only dead trees, or trees deemed an immediate hazard are removed from the right-of-way as soon as possible. All other removal requests are evaluated for preservation or removal and rated. Trees

will be removed in order of highest priority rating based on the number of criteria met. The criteria are not listed in order of importance and individually may not justify removal.

The tree will be included on a list of proposed street tree removals, which is sent monthly to the City Council and Environmental Commission. If no objection to the proposed removal is received, the tree will be removed by City or its contractors. This includes full stump grinding. It can take up to 48 months from the determination date for the City to remove the tree and make any permanent concrete repairs. Property owners may expedite this process by receiving approval to have the tree removed at their own expense. The City tries to replant where trees have been removed, but in most instances the replacement tree will not be planted in the same spot due to the presence of underground utilities and other concerns.

The City Council, or its designated representative; i.e. Director of Public Works or City Engineer, also has the discretion to identify special situations where a targeted replacement program may be desirable. An example is a comprehensive streetscape project in a commercial district where a primary goal is to unify the area through a newly designed streetscape. Street trees are a significant unifying feature and it may be important to replace all or a portion of the trees in order to create this unity and give a special identity to the particular street. In cases where this is appropriate, the City shall make relocation of existing healthy trees that are removed a priority.

The removal or trimming of a City tree by any person or entity other than the City of Rahway without express written consent is prohibited and subject to a fine of not more than \$500 or to imprisonment in the county jail for a period not exceeding 90 days, or both, in the discretion of the Municipal Judge.

The list of non-hazardous trees to be removed (in order) will be placed on the City's website. Hazardous trees will always be removed as soon as possible.

To request removal of a City tree, please call (732) 827-2060 or submit a Removal Request Form online through at cityofraahway.com/trees.

A STEP BY STEP WALK THROUGH THE PROCESS

1. The Tree Removal Request Form is available through the City's Department of Public Works either in person or via the web at cityofraahway.com/trees.
2. The Tree Removal Request Form can be returned to the Department. The fully executed Request Form must be accompanied by:
 - Proof of notification to the five closest affected neighbors and the City Environmental Commission. (This can be done either via certified mail and/or signature of the neighbor).

- A minimum of 4 photos documenting how the tree fits the minimum criteria.
 - If applicable, written approval by your Home Owners Association is required to be submitted with your request.
- 3a. If the tree meets the City of Rahway Tree Removal criteria, no objection to the proposed removal is received, and the appropriate time, as set forth in form B, has elapsed, the tree will be removed by City or its contractors. This includes full stump grinding. It can take up to 48 months from the determination date for the city to remove the tree and make any permanent concrete repairs.

Property owners may expedite this process by receiving approval to have the tree removed and sidewalk repaired at their own expense when they submit the request form. They must follow the City's permitting process & hire an insured tree contractor.

- 3b. If a written objection from a neighboring property is received, the request will be denied.

If an objection is raised, an appeal may be made to the City's Environmental Commission.

FORM A
CITY OF RAHWAY TREE REMOVAL REQUEST

Requestor Information

Requestor Name: _____
Requestor Address: _____
Requestor Email: _____
Requestor's Phone Number: _____
Address where tree(s) are being requested to be removed: _____

Information on Tree (s) to be Removed

Type of Tree (list type such as Oak, Redwood, Maple, etc): _____
Size of Tree diameter as measured around tree 54" above the ground): _____

Reason for Tree Removal Request

The following **MUST** be returned with this request:

1. Completed Form B: Tree Removal Criteria
2. A minimum of four (4) photographs documenting criteria damage/risk
3. Copies of letter to neighbors with signatures or certified mail cards for neighbors
4. Any other information that you believe will assist the Department in your request

I understand that trees may be removed **ONLY** if found to be within the criteria as established by the City of Rahway Tree Removal Policy. I understand that if approved, the process may take up to 48 months. I understand that if an objection is made by a neighbor, I will need to appeal with the City Environmental Commission.

Signature of Property Owner: _____ Date: _____
Print Name: _____

I would like to receive permitting information to remove the tree at my own expense and liability if approved.

For City Use Only

Date Received: _____
Appeal Date: _____
Number of Criteria Points: _____
City Official Signature: _____
Approved/Denied: _____

FORM B
CITY OF RAHWAY TREE REMOVAL CRITERIA

Level One (1 of these criteria must be met)

- Tree is dead, dying, split, and/or contains excessive decay.
- A tree has reached an over-mature condition and is in declining health which will result in its death within the year
- A tree is infected with a disease which cannot be treated successfully and/or there is a strong potential that the pathogen could spread to other trees in the immediate vicinity.
- A tree has been determined through a Hazard Evaluation Report to be a hazard because of its high potential for failure due to considerable dead or dying foliage, branches, roots or trunk and cannot be corrected through pruning or other reasonable arboricultural practices.
- Tree is a hazard to public health and safety as per the City's trained personnel and professionals.

Level Two (at least 3 of these criteria must be met)

When trees are not deemed dead, dying or hazardous, the following factors will be considered:

- Life expectancy of the tree is fewer than three (3) years.
- There is a limited amount of space allowable for tree growth.
- The overall quality and structural integrity of the tree is degraded as per the City's trained personnel and professionals.
- The tree has persistent and uncontrollable insect, disease or fruiting problems that are not an immediate threat to surrounding area.
- The tree requires frequent and extensive maintenance from the City as determined by City trained personnel and professionals.
- Two other replacement trees can be planted easily and in a timely manner.
- A tree requires extensive root pruning because of excessive hardscape damage resulting in the severe reduction of its capacity to support itself, thereby creating a potential safety hazard.
- There are numerous healthy trees in close proximity and of high quality near to the one considered for removal.

- There is significant and frequent damage, as determined by City trained personnel and professionals, caused by the tree to surrounding infrastructure such as sidewalks, streets, sewers, etc. and cannot be corrected through a sidewalk cutting or other creative program to repair damaged improvements.
- Tree has caused significant damage to private walls, driveways, walkways and decks.
- Tree is causing a major sight restriction at a street corner; removal may be necessary when pruning is not adequate to correct the problem.
- To facilitate a public works improvement project when extensive roots will be cut. Such projects include sidewalk and curb & gutter replacement.
- Tree is causing disruption of a sewer line which cannot be corrected by other measures such as lining the sewer. Verification from the City Engineer is required.

The City does not remove public trees due to:

- Dropping of leaves, flowers, seeds, bark, sap, stems, pests or other matter.
- To improve views.
- Damage to irrigation systems.
- Competition with turf or other plant material.
- Allergies.
- Damage to items that have been placed too close to the trunk such as pavers, bricks, blocks and concrete.
- Satellite TV Dishes
- Solar Panels

Specimen trees are exempt from many of the preceding tree removal criteria. These are trees characterized by their age, rarity, exceptional stature, or having above-average value.

No City tree shall be removed without first considering all practical alternatives to avoid the removal in an effort to maintain the City's tree inventory.

TREE REMOVAL REQUEST PROCESSING CHART

Tree Removal Permits shall be processed according to the following schedule; the time lines noted below are in addition to the period of time for initial staff review of the application, a site inspection and preparation of notices.

Reason For Removal	Comment Period	Appeal Period
Dead Tree	None, except to provide time for staff inspection to confirm dead tree or provide an arborist report.	None/No replanting requirement
Diseased Tree	None, need certified staff inspection or arborist report	None/No replanting requirement
Tree Location for Future Construction	10 Calendar Days	14 Calendar Days/Replanting 2 to 1 ratio
Emergency (Imminent Hazard)	None	None/No replanting
Tree Type or Nuisance (Including non-imminent hazard)	10 Calendar days	14 Calendar Days/ replanting 2 to 1 ratio

Please note that tree removal requests may be appealed by adjacent property owners during the comment period.

The City of Rahway encourages preservation of trees to the greatest extent feasible. In order to receive approval for a tree removal request, staff must verify that the set criteria are met and no neighbors have appealed in writing. Each application for a tree removal permit shall be reviewed and a decision rendered on approval or denial on the basis of the criteria set forth in Form B.

Sample Notification Letter

Dear Neighbor:

I am writing to inform you that I am placing an official request to the City of Rahway for the removal of the City tree located at _____. I am notifying you because you are one of the 5 closest property owners to the tree.

I am making this request due to the fact that the tree is causing the following dangers/problems:

If you would like to make any comments, either in favor or against this request please notify the City in writing within 10 days of the date of this letter. Comments can be addressed to City of Rahway Department of Public Works, 999 Hart Street, Rahway NJ 07065.

Thank you in advance for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

Name
Address

I, _____, acknowledge that I have received notice of the tree removal request as outlined in this letter and have no negative comments to that respect.

Signature

Address