University of Michigan Tree Preservation Policy

Introduction

The purpose of this document is to create a policy for tree preservation on the University of Michigan campus. Preservation, rather than relocation/removal, should be the first priority or many of the significant trees on campus would be at risk. If preservation of a particular tree is not possible, then relocation should be the second option. If the tree size, location, or other factors make this infeasible, then removal becomes the last and least desirable option.

Preservation

The preservation of existing trees in any campus development is of the utmost importance. Many of the trees on campus are significant either due to their size or species, or because they have some historic identity. Large canopy trees may take 100 years or more to reach their full size. When a large tree is removed the impact is immediate and a part of the campus history is lost. The removal of small to mid size trees is not as dramatic, however the impact on the future campus landscape is significant. When small to mid size trees are eliminated today we are eliminating the majestic large trees of the future. We enjoy the large trees on the campus today because of the preservation efforts of those who came before us.

Specific Procedures for Preserving Existing Trees

1. A tree survey will be done as part of the initial design work on any campus development project. The survey will show the locations of the existing trees directly on the site, as well as on any surrounding areas that may be impacted by the project.
2. The Project Lead (PL) will meet with the University Forester (UF) to categorize the trees on the survey. The trees will be categorized as follows:
    a. significant trees to remain and be protected
    b. significant trees that can be relocated
    c. trees that are not significant or are of low quality that can be removed if necessary
3. This information will be recorded on the survey and provided to the designers. The designers will be instructed to develop building and site concepts that will protect significant trees identified on the survey to remain.
4. Tree protection methods will be reviewed and approved by the UF during the design development phase. This includes all areas impacted by the project including those outside the construction limit line.
5. Significant trees can only be removed with the approval of the Associate Vice President for Facilities and Operations (AVPFO). The UF, PL, and the University Planner (UP) will provide a written summary of the significance of the tree and reasons for removal to the AVPFO for review and approval of its removal.

Protection

When it is determined that existing trees are to be preserved, it becomes critical that they are protected during construction. Construction damage to existing trees is not always apparent and its effects may take years to emerge. The most common construction damage is root damage due to soil compaction.

Specific Procedures for Protecting Trees

1. Significant trees to remain and be protected will be clearly identified on the site plans. The protective zone around each tree will also be clearly identified. Where possible, the protective zone will extend to the tree canopy drip line.
2. The methods of protection will be determined by existing University specifications or by the UF in special cases. The installation of the tree protection will be the responsibility of the contractor.
3. Site contractors will be instructed that no activity, including parking or storage of materials, will be allowed within the protective zones, and that protective fences or other methods of protection will not be moved, removed, or altered. Violations are subject to penalties (refer to supplemental general conditions).
4. The UF will be allowed to periodically inspect the tree protection areas for compliance. The UF will contact the PL with concerns. If there is not sufficient resolution, the UF will pursue higher administrative action up to the AVPFO in a timely manner.

Relocation or Removal

Relocation of existing trees from the site will mean transplantation by either tree spade or by the balled and burlaped method. The UF along with the UP will determine the new location.

Removal includes cutting the tree down and debris disposal. The decision to remove a significant tree can only be made by the AVPFO. This includes removals requested during any phase of a project, including the initial design phase and construction operations.

In order to maintain the campus forest, significant trees to be removed will be replaced in kind by the project responsible for the removal.

Specific Procedures for Removal and Relocation

1. The UF and PL will decide whether the removal will be done by in-house crews or by the building contractor. Debris from removals will be disposed of off-site within 24 hours of the removal unless otherwise approved by the PL.
2. The PL will give the UF a minimum of two weeks' notice before removals take place, unless there is a safety concern. In these cases, the PL will give the UF as much notice as possible.
3. The project responsible for removing the trees will fund the cost of transplantation or permanent removal by cutting the tree down.
4. When significant trees are removed, the project responsible for their removal will provide funding for replacement trees. Replacement trees will reflect the individual or cumulative caliper of the trees removed. For example, two 5" caliper trees could be replaced with one 10" caliper tree or five 2" caliper trees. The replacement trees will be planted on the project site or elsewhere on campus as determined by the UF and UP.

Acronyms:
AVPFO – Associate Vice President for Facilities and Operations
PL – Project Lead
UF – University Forester
UP – University Planner