



## ***CITY OF GAINESVILLE POLICY ON REQUESTS FOR WORK BY THE CITY OF GAINESVILLE TREE MAINTENANCE TEAM***

(June 2004)

The Parks Division will accept and investigate any work requests from any source regarding a tree growing on City-owned property or parts of trees that overhang or have fallen onto City-owned property or a public right-of-way. The work will be evaluated, and if appropriate, accomplished by City staff utilizing the following priority system:

(1) **EMERGENCY** WORK ORDER: IMMEDIATE DISPATCH (24-7-52).

***Examples:***

Street or sidewalk is blocked because a large tree has uprooted or split through the trunk, or when a large branch breaks and is hanging into traffic.

(2) **PRIORITY:** DISPATCH OF TREE CREW TO RESOLVE HAZARD.

Note: Collector streets take priority over local streets. Degree of hazard determines sequence of assignment.

***Examples:*** Limbs blocking traffic directional signals.

Dead and deteriorating trees or limbs larger than 5" in diameter over road or sidewalk.  
Low limbs preventing safe passage of emergency vehicles, RTS or school buses, or large trucks.

Control of epidemic insect infestations (e.g. Southern Pine Beetle)

(3) **ROUTINE:** DISPATCH BASED ON OPERATIONAL EFFICIENCY

***Examples:*** Small dead trees or branches over streets or sidewalks.

Routine street pruning.

Work so other City Departments can do their jobs (sweeping streets, mowing parks, garbage removal, stump grinding in nature parks).

Non-epidemic disease control.

(4) **GENERAL:** DISPATCH WHEN TIME PERMITS.

Note: Immediate risk is not an issue; the benefit is for a few citizens.

***Examples:*** Streetlight or palm frond trim; limbs brushing top of RV's.

(5) **SPECIAL:** Directives from City Management.

The work of the City's Tree Maintenance Team will be of two types:

***Hazard Abatement.*** A tree crew will be dispatched as soon as possible to resolve EMERGENCY, PRIORITY and some SPECIAL work orders. If during the completion of the work order, the tree crew is asked by a resident to remove limbs from City trees that overhang their property but such work is not necessary to resolve the safety issue, the tree crew will advise the resident that such work will be accomplished during the routine preventive maintenance pruning of trees in their neighborhood.

***Preventive Maintenance.*** ROUTINE, GENERAL and some SPECIAL work orders are considered *preventative maintenance*. The City's pruning goal is to strengthen the structure of every tree trimmed. "Structurally pruned" trees diminish in the likelihood of future limb or tree failure. The result of structural pruning is a branching habit that diminishes the need for future routine pruning because it results in a higher canopy level over the street. This improves safety for large vehicles. Fire trucks have sensors on the ladders that alert fire fighters when they are too close to a structure or utility line. Low limbs can tear off such sensors. While accomplishing preventive maintenance, the tree crew will remove branches over private property as necessary to accomplish the structural pruning goal.

If property owners in the neighborhood where the tree crew is performing preventive maintenance ask the crew to remove branches from a tree originating on public property but which overhang their property, the crew will do so, provided the request does not require the crew to backtrack in their work.

Work requests to remove branches from right-of-way trees (or trees from other City-owned property that overhang yards. The common law rule supports the premise that the owner of adjacent property has a right to remove "nuisance" branches from a tree growing on the adjacent property, so long as the branch removal does not jeopardize the life of the tree. Residents who call in to request that a City tree crew prune limbs from a tree growing on the adjacent City-owned property will be advised of their right to have this work accomplished on their own. If they request to wait until the City tree crew is providing assigned and scheduled preventative maintenance in that neighborhood, they can ask the crew to remove the limbs. The crew will do so under the following conditions:

First, the branch removal must not be detrimental to the structural stability and future maintenance of the tree.

Second, the request must be made of the crew while they are working within less than two blocks of the requested work.

Third, the street on which the tree is growing is part of the assigned preventative maintenance work order.

Work requests to remove superficial roots from right-of-way trees. Maintenance of the right-of-way between a City street and a private residence is not a service the City generally provides. If a resident reports that the resident believes a hazardous condition exists due to the roots of a right-of-way tree, the City will take investigate and will remove superficial roots in cases where the area that has been improved by the government in some manner that invites public use.

Undeveloped rights-of-way. This section refers to City-owned property where the purpose of the ownership is not public access to the area. The vegetation in unpaved alleys or undeveloped streets is not maintained. Drainage or utility rights-of-way are maintained only for their function. The Parks Division tree crew will not trim limbs from trees on undeveloped rights-of-way unless a hazardous condition as described herein is determined by the City to exist.