BERNITA A. REESE, CPRP
Director

THE CITY OF
COLUMBUS
ANDREW J. GINTHER, MAYOR

RECREATION AND PARKS
DEPARTMENT

December 18, 2025

Re: Unauthorized tree removal / Applying for Forestry permits

To whom it may concern:

Columbus Forestry is reaching out to you regarding the need for a permit to impact public trees and to notify you of upcoming changes to the Forestry permit application process.

A public tree is any tree located on property owned by the City of Columbus, which includes parks, right-of-way and other City-owned land. Any work on or in the Critical Root Zone (CRZ) of a public tree requires a Forestry permit. There is no application fee for the permit, but it is required before work begins. Whether you are a private property owner, a developer or a private utility, anyone impacting a public tree must apply for a Forestry permit. Planting, maintaining or removing a public tree must be done under the supervision of a certified arborist. A Forestry arborist will do an inspection and approve, modify or deny the request. The permittee must comply with all specifications of the permit, and if a tree removal triggers tree mitigation, any applicable fees must be paid prior to permit issuance.

Removal of public trees without a Forestry permit is prohibited under Columbus City Code Section **912.04** that states, *"No person, without privilege to do so, shall recklessly do any of the following in a public street, park, or public place: (A) Break, deface, injure, mutilate, top, kill or destroy any tree or shrub,"* and **912.05,** which states, *"No person shall plant, set out, or engage in the maintenance of any tree or shrub by removal, stump grinding, application of herbicide or other chemicals, fertilizing, bracing, cabling, pruning, surgery work, cutting above or below the ground, or cutting of roots in a public street, park, or public space without first obtaining a permit issued by the department."*

Forestry's permitting system will change in 2026. To prepare, companies and individuals applying for a Forestry permit should access the City's permit portal to create a profile. A link to that portal can be found here: https://portal.columbus.gov/Permits/Default.aspx.

If you are unsure if a tree is considered a public tree, refer to the Public Tree Inventory at https://columbusrecparks.com/nature/urban-forestry/street-tree-inventory/ or contact Forestry. Not all public trees are inventoried, but if the tree is growing on City property, it is a public tree and Chapter 912 applies. If your organization has questions or would like additional information, contact Forestry@columbus.gov to request an in-person or virtual training.

Sincerely,

Rosalie Hendon

Rosalie Hendon
Columbus City Forester