

Tree Removal and Replacement as Part of the West Pearl Streetscape Improvements

City of Boulder Urban Forestry staff evaluated all of the trees included in the city's West Pearl Streetscape Improvements, which are funded by the 2011 voter-approved Capital Improvement Bond. Staff elected to replace some of the trees based on a number of factors. The following is a summary of the evaluation and background on the decisions made.

The West Pearl Streetscape Improvements include the removal of 42 trees and planting of 37 trees; an additional 57 existing trees will be retained. Trees targeted for removal are primarily green ash and were determined to be in "poor" or "fair" health. Factors evaluated during the assessments include the overall tree health, the tree's crown size relative to its lifespan, trunk wounds, previous storm damage, structure, presence of Lilac Ash Borer, and vulnerability to Emerald Ash Borer (EAB).

The ash trees marked for removal on 9th street were evaluated and are in either "poor" or "fair" condition. These trees exhibit signs of Lilac Ash Borer, a common insect pest of ash trees that tunnels through the sapwood, causing crown dieback. In addition to the Lilac Ash Borer, the ash trees are at risk in the short-term from EAB. EAB is (at most) one mile away from this location and probably already much closer.

Any ash trees not treated with pesticides will eventually die from EAB and unfortunately treatments will need to be done for the life of the tree. The ash trees on 9th Street are below the city's 10-inch diameter threshold for EAB treatment, therefore all pesticide applications would be the responsibility of the adjacent property owner. Previous damage from Lilac Ash Borer can also prevent uptake of the systemic pesticides applied to control EAB. Given the size and condition of these trees, long-term treatment does not coincide with community goals to minimize pesticide use. The existing mulberry tree on 9th Street will remain in place.

The city has determined replacement to be the best course of action for these trees. It is estimated that the City of Boulder has more than 90,000 ash trees on public and private property. Proactive replacement of declining ash trees supports citywide management efforts for the invasive and destructive EAB and ensures the future health and stability of Boulder's urban forest.

The West Pearl Streetscape Improvements between 11th and 7th streets, include adding an irrigation system to all the trees along Pearl Street, 10th Street and south on 9th Street; tree replacement; and installation of tree grates and guards. Other improvements include new sidewalks, street benches, bike racks, sandstone West End monuments, and enhanced intersections at Pearl and 10th and 9th streets.

If you have questions, please contact Ashlee Herring at 303-413-4315 or herring@bouldercolorado.gov.