

PRIVATE PROPERTY TREE REMOVAL LOAN PROGRAM POLICY AND PROTOCOL

OBJECTIVE

The objective of this program is to assist City of Rockford residents with limited financial resources who live in and own their own homes to contract at a discounted price to have dead, dying or diseased trees removed from their property by obtaining a “no interest” loan from the City of Rockford, which would be repaid over time through their monthly water bill.

SCOPE OF PROGRAM

The City of Rockford will provide “no interest” loans to residents who meet the qualifications outlined below. The total amount of the loans outstanding to all residents shall not exceed \$300,000 at any given time. The program will be offered to qualified residents over a 3 year period. At the end of the 3 years, no additional applications will be accepted. The amount of the loan provided to residents for their property shall be determined by the Finance Department pursuant to the guidelines set forth below. The funds will be available for loan on a “first come, first served” basis. If no program funds are available for disbursement, the resident may choose to be placed on a waiting list to be maintained by the Finance Department. Loan payments will be used to replenish the funds available for the program. An application for loan shall not be deemed to be complete until all documents required under this program have been received by the Finance Department. The City of Rockford reserves the right to refuse a loan to any applicant who fails to meet the qualifications below or for any other legal basis. The Public Works department will provide participants a pre-qualified vendor list from which quotes for removal of the tree(s) will be solicited. Applications will be verified by them for removal pursuant to the criteria below. Vendors were selected through a request for qualifications process and be required to provide insurance certificates naming the City as additional insured

QUALIFICATIONS FOR THE LOAN PROGRAM

In order for the resident(s) to obtain the no interest loan from the City, the resident(s) must meet all of the following qualifications:

- The residents’ annual household gross income shall not exceed \$70,000. This information will be verified by the Finance Department.
- The residents shall submit their tax return filed in the preceding calendar year along with their application. Failure to produce the tax return to the Finance Department will disqualify the resident(s) from the program.
- If an individual does not file an income tax return with the Internal Revenue Service, the City will also accept as proof of income a summary report from a State or Federal agency outlining benefits provided, such as Social Security.
- The Finance Department shall determine based upon the totality of the circumstances that the residents are credit worthy and financially capable of repaying the “no interest” loan from the City. A homeowner with a history of repeated delinquent payments for water accounts will not be considered eligible for this program.
- The Finance Department shall determine that the property upon which the subject trees are located is owner-occupied. Trees located upon rental property are not eligible for this program.
- Eligible trees are those meeting the following criteria:
 - Dead or dying; or
 - Diseased, when there is a reasonable expectation that the tree will be lost; and
 - Four inches or larger in diameter

- The City Forester or designee shall verify that the tree(s) located on the residents' property meet the eligible criteria and that the tree should be removed. Removal of the tree(s) will not include stump grinding or restoration of the removal site(s).

PROCESS & PROCEDURE FOR THE LOAN PROGRAM

All City residents who meet the qualifications above shall apply for a loan from the City in the following manner:

- The resident may apply for the program in person, by mail or e-mail to the Finance Department. However no application shall be deemed complete until all required documents have been received by the Finance Department. The Finance Department reserves the right to obtain original, rather than facsimile signatures on all required documents.
- The resident shall complete the loan application form and loan agreement.
- All persons with an ownership interest in the property shall execute the application and loan documents.
- The resident shall provide to the Finance Department a copy of their tax return from the preceding year (or verification of income, if no taxes are filed) and submit all the documents as stated above.
- The Finance Department will process the applications for participation in the program, including verification of income and owner-occupied status.
- The Finance Department will determine whether the applicant is eligible for the program and the Public Works Forestry Division will inspect the property for eligible trees. The Forestry Division will notify in writing all applicants of their decision.
- The applicant shall contact no less than two approved vendors for tree removal quotes. Said quotes shall be forwarded to the Finance Department. The Finance Department shall structure the loan agreement based on the lowest cost quote obtained. The City will not allow deviations from the selected vendor and will not proceed with payment for services should the homeowner fail to utilize the identified vendor.
- The Public Works Department will coordinate with the successful applicant and the chosen vendor to complete removal of the trees verified for removal by the Public Works Department.
- The Finance Department will review a repayment plan with the successful applicant, based upon the quoted price, and obtain approval to proceed from the Public Works Department.
- The Finance Department will explain to the successful applicant and establish a monthly surcharge to the applicant's water bill for repayment of the tree removal costs with the monthly obligation to the homeowner for the tree removal based on the following schedule:
 - Up to \$750 – 12 months
 - \$751 to \$1500 – 24 months
 - Over \$1500 – to be negotiated between the Finance Department and the homeowner based on their ability to repay.

An administrative fee of \$90 will be added to the total cost in order to keep the program cost-neutral.

- The Public Works Department shall provide final confirmation of removal to the Finance Department and approve all associated invoices for payment by the Finance Department.
- A copy of the loan document shall be recorded against the resident's property.