



OAK WILT TRENCHING PROJECTS Policies and Covered Expenses

OVERVIEW

Oak wilt is a lethal tree disease that can spread through entire neighborhoods, killing huge expanses of oaks. The oak wilt fungus moves through the roots from sick to healthy oaks, creating an expanding area of dead and dying trees. Root transmission of the fungus can be stopped by using trenching equipment to cut the roots in a circle around the infected oaks. The trench is immediately refilled, improvements are repaired and the landscape is restored.

In Lakeway, oak wilt trenches usually run through several lots. The City of Lakeway has taken the lead because these multi-owner projects are complex and difficult to coordinate. The City Forester identifies oak wilt infected trees, develops a trench plan, gets consent from the necessary property owners and hires an independent contractor. These city-funded trenching projects are paid for with tax dollars and oak wilt fees from builders and developers.

Most oak wilt trenches in Lakeway are cut with a rock saw. Tight spots and utility line crossings are dug by hand or with a backhoe. The trench is 8 to 30 inches wide and 40 to 60 inches deep. The trench is backfilled with the spoils that came out and excess spoils are hauled off.

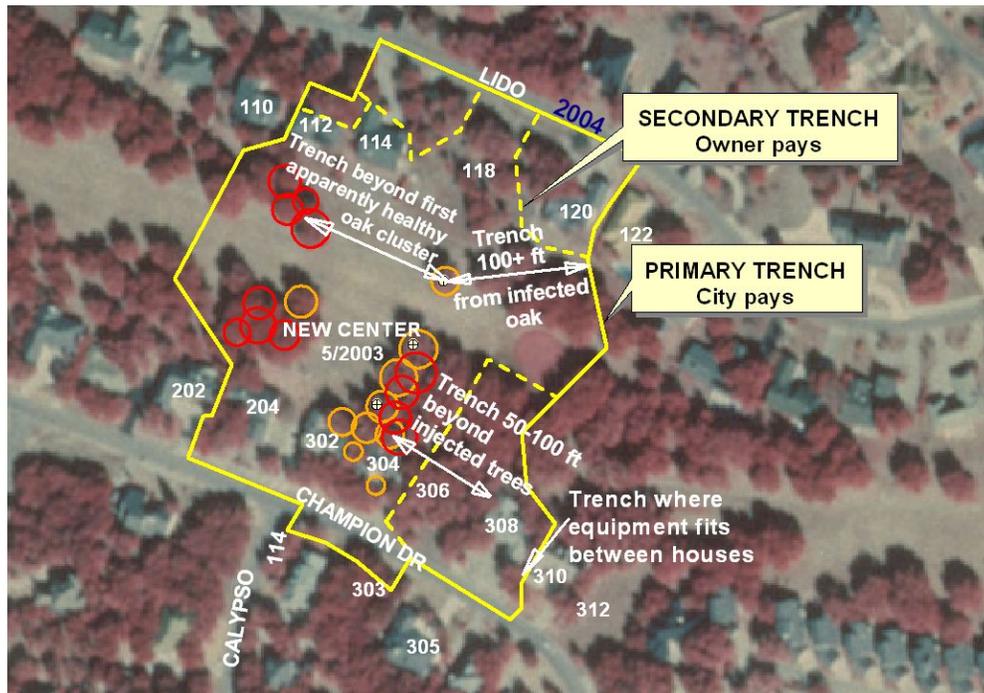
The trenching contractor repairs all damaged landscape and hardscape including driveways, rock walls, fences, and sprinklers, etc. The disturbed area varies from 6 to 12 feet wide. Damaged turf is replaced with St. Augustine or Bermuda sod or seed, depending on the pre-trench condition of the lawn. Trees, shrubs, flowers or other plants that must be removed for equipment access are not replaced. On some undeveloped properties and in areas that are not landscaped, mulch from the project may be spread over the trench line. The landscape may take some time to recover, but usually it looks fine after just a few months. The owner may have to fill in some holes with top soil if the trench settles, especially after repeated heavy rains.



CITY POLICIES REGARDING TRENCH PLACEMENT

A “primary” oak wilt trench is meant to stop the spread through the entire neighborhood. The City installs only primary trenches that meet the following conditions:

1. Primary trenches are always installed a *minimum* distance of 100 feet from infected oaks.
2. The distance will exceed the 100 foot minimum where there is a high density of oaks and/or where oaks are exceptionally large.
3. There must be a buffer of apparently healthy oaks in the 100+ foot space between the infected trees and the trench.
4. The oaks in the 100+ foot buffer should not have been treated with fungicide prior to trench installation.
5. If oaks beyond the infected trees have been treated with fungicide, the trench must be installed at least 50-100 feet beyond the treated trees.
6. The trench will be laid out through spaces where there is room to run large equipment and where there are few underground utilities wherever possible.
7. The trench will be routed through undeveloped lots wherever feasible.
8. A rock saw will not be used less than 15 feet from a house foundation or less than 30 feet from a swimming pool.
9. The City Forester has the final authority to determine where the trench will be located and whether vegetation must be trimmed or removed for equipment access.



Optional “secondary” trenches may be installed inside the primary trench to protect healthy oaks in the 100+ foot buffer. The City does not pay for secondary trenches, but homeowners can install them at their own expense. The advantage to homeowners is that the cost of secondary trenches is sometimes far lower than the cost of repeated fungicide treatments for large groups of trees. The disadvantage is that secondary trenches are riskier; trenches closer than 100 feet have

less chance of stopping the oak wilt. Homeowners who are interested should discuss this option with the City Forester.

TRENCHING EXPENSES COVERED BY THE CITY

Lakeway is one of only a small handful of Texas cities that pays for trenching on private property. Oak wilt centers are trenched as the annual city budget permits. There is no guarantee that the City will trench all oak wilt centers. At present, the City pays for trench installation and basic repairs, but due to rising costs, limits are being set on what the City will cover.

Homeowners who can't wait for the City to trench their area can trench at their own expense, utilizing the services of the City Forester to plan and execute their project. If the project meets Texas Forest Service specifications, participating property owners may collect a cost share refund of up to \$1000 per owner from the TFS, depending on availability of state funds.

The City will pay for basic repairs only. Homeowners who want more extensive repairs can hire the trenching contractor or any other contractor of their choice at their own expense. The city will not reimburse homeowners who purchase more expensive repairs for any part of that repair. Following are some examples of what the city will and won't pay for. As situations arise that are not covered in the guidelines below, the City Forester has the authority to judge whether a certain repair is an acceptable city expense.

1. Concrete:
 - Driveway and sidewalk cuts will be saw-cut to smooth the edges and neatly patched with wire or rebar reinforcement at city expense.
 - Exposed aggregate and smooth concrete surfaces will be matched for type but the color match and texture may not be perfect. Color differences often even out with time and weathering.
 - The owner must pay if replacement of an entire driveway panel is desired instead of a patch along the saw cut.
2. Grass repairs in manicured lawns:
 - Sections of manicured lawns damaged by equipment will be replaced with Bermuda or St. Augustine sod by the trenching contractor at city expense.
 - The homeowner with a non-standard grass like Zoysia should find a distributor and pay the difference between the premium grass and standard grasses.
 - For example, if a pallet of Bermuda costs \$100 and Zoysia costs \$130, the homeowner must either take a standard grass replacement or pay the extra \$30 out of pocket.
 - Rough lawns will be repaired with topsoil and seed.
 - The owner must pay for the difference in the cost of lawn repairs if a lawn better than the pre-trench condition is desired or if owner wants a landscaper to do the work.
 - It will be the owner's responsibility to water and care for the new grass.
 - The owner will be responsible for adding soil if sinking or settling occurs after the trenching project is complete.
 - There is no warranty on lawn repairs.

3. Landscape plants (trees, shrubs, flowers) other than grass:
 - The city will not replace landscape plants other than grass.
 - The homeowner who wishes to preserve landscape plants can dig them up prior to trenching and replant them afterwards or hire a contractor at their own expense.
4. Repairs to improvements (rock walls, fences, etc.):
 - The city will pay for improvements to be repaired one time only.
 - If the Forester is satisfied with the quality of the repair but the homeowner is not, the homeowner can hire someone to redo the work at their own expense.
5. Cleanup on landscaped lots:
 - The city will pay to clean up dirt and spoils to the Forester's satisfaction. Small amounts of spoils may remain in the grass, landscape rock, etc.
 - A homeowner not satisfied with cleanup can hire someone at their own expense for additional cleanup.
6. Cleanup on undeveloped lots:
 - The city will pay to backfill the trench and level out the spoils.
 - Mulched trees from the job site may or may not be spread over the trench line depending on availability.
 - The city will not add topsoil, seed, or sod to undeveloped or unlandscaped lots.
7. Stump removal:
 - Trees removed for equipment access will be cut at ground level.
 - The homeowner who wants the stump removed for a new planting hole can hire the trenching contractor or someone else to dig it up or grind it.
8. Water and sewer lines:
 - When the trench crosses household water or sewer lines, it may be necessary for the contractor to cut and repair the line, resulting in loss of service for up to one half day. Homeowner will be given as much advance notice as possible.
9. Other utilities:
 - The trenching contractor will locate by hand and dig under telephone, cable TV, gas and electric lines to avoid disrupting service.
 - If service lines are cut accidentally, the city's trenching contractor will try to restore service as soon as possible. However, repairs may take more than a day if the utility company's repairman is unavailable.
 - The city and the city's contractor will not be liable for temporary loss of service.
10. Sprinklers:
 - The city will pay to repair all sprinklers and lines cut or damaged during trenching.
 - Sprinklers outside the trenched area and those not working before the job begins are not the responsibility of the contractor.
 - The contractor and homeowner should test the sprinklers together before trenching begins to ensure that all are working, and again after the job is complete.
11. The homeowner must bring all needed repairs to the attention of the Forester before the project is finished and final payment is made. The City will not pay for additional repairs after the project is complete.

If you have questions about this document, please call the City Forester at 608-9722 or email forester@cityoflakeway.com.