




## MEMORANDUM

**TO:** Mayor and City Council

**FROM:** Kimberly A. McNeeley, M.Ed., CPRP, Director  
Austin Parks and Recreation Department 

**THROUGH:** Stephanie Hayden Howard, LMSW, Assistant City Manager

**DATE:** September 29, 2023

**SUBJECT:** Barton Springs Tree Update

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This memorandum provides an update regarding the decision to remove “Flo” at Barton Springs Pool as recommended at the City Council work session on September 19, 2023. The Parks and Recreation Department (PARD) recognizes the significance of this tree and shares the community’s attachment. Several factors were taken into consideration in reaching this decision, most importantly, public safety.

### **PARD At-Risk Tree Safety Protocols**

PARD safety policies for trees are set following International Society for Arboriculture tree risk assessments. Accordingly, the policy sets a 48-hour deadline if a tree risk assessment identifies a tree as an extreme risk hazard and it is located in an area with potential ‘targets’ that include individuals and infrastructure that would be negatively impacted from a tree failure. The same policy directs that a tree identified as high risk should be addressed within two weeks.

At this time, Flo has been reviewed by four consulting arborists. Two arborists placed the tree in the imminent risk hazard and two identified it in the high-risk category. Following PARD’s defined safety risk priorities, Flo’s removal should have already occurred.

### **Structural Engineer Review**

The City’s structural engineer evaluated the tree and found that, “the existing tree is not structurally sound resulting in imminent failure. This creates a life and safety risk for the public and must be addressed in a timely manner to reduce any damage or harm to those in the area.”

### **Next Steps**

Structural defects in the tree have existed for decades, and PARD has worked hard to support and maintain the beloved tree. The arborist and structural engineer reports, which are available online at [austintexas.gov/BSPTree](http://austintexas.gov/BSPTree), and established internal safety risk policy contributed to PARD’s conclusion that the structural defects combined with the confirmed diagnosis of brittle cedar fungus will cause this tree to fail. A tree of this size in an area of high use, even with barricades blocking access, is a life safety hazard. Unfortunately, due to the safety risks, the tree will be removed on October 5, 2023 at a time when Barton Springs Pool is closed.

### **Honoring**

PARD recognizes the immense value Flo has provided to our shared community and is collecting stories, memories, and photos about the beloved tree. The community is invited to share their remembrances via email at [treestories@austintexas.gov](mailto:treestories@austintexas.gov).

PARD invites the community to honor Flo at a Celebration of Life on October 4, 2023, at 6:30 p.m. at Barton Springs Pool. The celebration of life will include a blessing, speakers about Flo's history, and music.

PARD will also be collaborating with community stakeholders to honor and memorialize Flo. An outline and schedule of public meetings will be available at [Barton Springs Pool Tree Updates](#).

cc: Jesús Garza, Interim City Manager