



TO: Canal Collaborative Partners

FROM: High Line Canal Conservancy

DATE: May 17<sup>th</sup>, 2022

SUBJECT: High Line Canal Tree Risk Assessment Request

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### **Background on the Canal-wide Tree Risk Assessment**

The tree canopy is one of the Canal's greatest assets, enhancing the trail user experience while supporting community resiliency and wildlife habitat. The 71 miles of the High Line Canal trail are home to over 23,000 mature trees (trees larger than six inches in diameter), making the Canal a vital component of the region's urban forest. Cottonwoods have been the defining tree of the Canal corridor for over a century, with a 2016 Canal-wide tree inventory finding cottonwoods to compose over 40% of the Canal's canopy. As many of these cottonwoods near the end of their lifespan and become increasingly stressed by low water availability, tree canopy care is a critical management responsibility to ensure a safe environment for trail users and jurisdictional maintenance staff.

Denver Water and the jurisdictions along the Canal came together in 2016 to complete the Canal-wide tree inventory, assessing all trees along the corridor that were 6" or greater in diameter. Since then, Denver Water and the jurisdictions have invested over \$1 million to prune and remove trees that pose a risk to trail users. Since that inventory was completed, the degradation of the mature trees on the corridor has only accelerated and an updated tree risk assessment is needed to prioritize trees for prunes and removals.

### **Supporting the Transition of Maintenance Responsibilities**

As the maintenance responsibilities along the Canal evolve, tree canopy care stands out as one of the most costly and urgent needs associated with maintaining the Canal for both recreation and stormwater management. Three stormwater managers who have taken over maintenance responsibilities from Denver Water are currently performing a tree risk assessment on the Canal, covering about six miles of the corridor. The Conservancy is working with these partners and the Mile High Flood District to manage the selected contractor, SavATree, as they assess all trees greater than 12" in diameter and identify hazard trees. This contractor has capacity to apply this tree risk assessment to the entire Canal in the Summer of 2022 if partners are able to contribute funding to this effort.

Once the tree risk assessment is completed, the recommendations will provide a roadmap for how the Canal can be brought to a baseline level of maintenance as we work to facilitate the transition of maintenance responsibilities. Available funding from Denver Water and Arapahoe County Open Spaces for tree work recommended through this assessment will be prioritized for jurisdictions that commit to take on additional maintenance responsibilities in the coming years.

### **Funding Request**

Based on the number of trees that were over 12" in diameter during the 2016 inventory, the tree risk assessment would evaluate 9,291 trees along the Canal corridor. At a cost of \$14.49 per tree based on SavATree's pricing, plus a 20% management cost for the Conservancy to manage this Canal-wide effort,



the tree risk assessment will cost an estimated \$161,000. Based on the tree counts per jurisdiction, the cost for each partner is estimated to be between \$13,000 and \$26,000. However, thanks to generous matching funds provided by Arapahoe County (\$62,000) and Denver Water (\$9,000), the Conservancy is requesting just \$9,000 from each Canal Collaborative partner to complete this tree risk assessment in 2022.

This project will assess all trees on the corridor larger than 12" in diameter and provide detailed data about potential risks posed by these trees using the Colorado Tree Coalition tree risk assessment protocols. This data would be added to Denver Water's dataset from the 2016 tree inventory, providing a valuable update to the health of each tree and prioritizing trees for pruning and removal that can help bring the Canal to a maintenance baseline as jurisdictions evaluate the assumption of additional maintenance responsibilities. Each jurisdiction that participates will have full access to these datasets to prioritize and track tree canopy care efforts. Please respond to this request by Friday, June 3rd to let the Conservancy know if you are able to participate.