

Memorandum



CITY OF DALLAS

DATE October 19, 2026

TO Honorable Members of the Quality of Life, Arts & Culture Committee: Zarin D. Gracey (Chair), Laura Cadena (Vice Chair), Adam Bazaldua, Cara Mendelsohn, Paul Ridley, Bill Roth, Chad West

SUBJECT **Proposed Chapter 18 Amendment Related to Vegetation in an Alley, Street, or Sidewalk**

The purpose of this memorandum is to brief the Quality of Life, Arts & Culture Committee on a proposed clarifying amendment to Dallas City Code Section 18-14.1, "Vegetation in Alley, Street, or Sidewalk." The proposed amendment makes the provisions clearer and resolves an internal conflict between Section 18-13 and Section 18-14.1 that has created confusion for both property owners and City staff regarding responsibility for vegetation obstructing the public right-of-way.

Background

Chapter 18, Article II, "Weeds, Grass, and Vegetation," establishes the responsibility of property owners to maintain vegetation on and adjacent to their property. Section 18-13(c) defines "premises" for purposes of the entire article to include the lot, plot, or parcel of land, plus the front or side parkway between the property line or sidewalk and the curb or traveled way, and the rear or side parkway between the property line and the center line of an adjacent alley.

Section 18-14.1(a) currently makes it an offense for an owner, occupant, or person in control of private premises to allow vegetation to grow on the premises so as to project "across the property line" over or into the right-of-way of the alley, street, or sidewalk.

These two provisions conflict. Because "premises" is already defined to extend beyond the property line into the adjacent parkway and alley area, vegetation originating within that portion of the premises does not cross the property line, even when it fully obstructs the alley, street, or sidewalk. .

The practical effect is that maintenance responsibility and subsequent enforcement depend on where vegetation originates rather than on whether the right-of-way is obstructed. Two premises with right-of-way obstructions may be treated differently, and property owners receive inconsistent answers about their responsibility. This stands in contrast to litter and high grass and weeds within the same parkway and alley area, which are already clearly the responsibility of the adjacent property owner.

Proposed Amendment

The City Attorney's Office has prepared the attached draft ordinance amending Section 18-14.1. The proposed amendment would:

- Remove the phrase “across the property line” so that the offense depends on whether vegetation projects over or into the right-of-way, not on the point at which it originates.
- Clarify the covered area by stating that the owner, occupant, or person in control is responsible for vegetation growing on the premises including up to the front curb or rear center of adjacent alley.
- State as express offenses that vegetation may not obstruct the visibility of a traffic control sign, signal, or device, or interfere with garbage or trash collection adjacent to the sidewalk. These conditions are presently addressed only as an exception within the defense subsection, where they are easily overlooked and difficult to explain to residents.
- Retain the existing clearance standards without change, including weeds and grass not more than 12 inches high, 15 feet of clearance over an alley or street, and eight feet of clearance over a sidewalk, but move this language out of the defenses to prosecution and into clear offense sections.
- Retain the existing provision that vegetation growing in violation of the section is a nuisance subject to abatement by the City under Section 18-17.

Interdepartmental Coordination

Code Compliance Services coordinated with the Department of Sanitation Services and the Department of Transportation and Public Works, both of which depend on clear rights-of-way to deliver core services and both of which support this clarification.

- Sanitation Services requires unobstructed alley and curbside access to complete collection routes. Overhanging limbs and encroaching vegetation obstruct collection vehicles, contribute to missed or relocated collections, cause equipment damage, and create safety hazards for crews.
- Transportation and Public Works requires clear travel lanes and sidewalks and unobstructed visibility of traffic control devices. Encroaching vegetation reduces sight distance at intersections, obscures regulatory signage, and sometimes forces pedestrians, including those using mobility devices, into the roadway.

A single, clearly stated standard allows both departments and Code Compliance Services to communicate the same expectation to residents and to address obstructions consistently.

Benefits

- Resolves the conflict between Section 18-13 and Section 18-14.1 and eliminates ambiguity regarding responsibility for vegetation in the parkway and alley area.
- Aligns vegetation responsibility with the responsibility already established for litter and high grass and weeds in the same area, giving property owners a consistent expectation to maintain their premises.

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- Supports uniform application by Code Compliance Services staff and reduces case-by-case interpretation regarding the origin of vegetation.
- Advances public safety, accessibility, and reliable solid waste collection by supporting the clearing of obstructed alleys, streets, and sidewalks.

Conclusion

The proposed amendment provides a clear and consistent standard for vegetation affecting the public right-of-way, aligns Section 18-14.1 with the definition of “premises” already established in Section 18-13, and supports service delivery and safety objectives shared by Code Compliance Services, Sanitation Services, and Transportation and Public Works.

The City Council will consider this item at the November 10 City Council meeting.

For questions or concerns, please contact Code Compliance Services Director Chris Christian at 214-670-3118 or chris.christian@dallas.gov.

Attachment: Proposed ordinance amending Chapter 18, Section 18-14.1

Service First, Now!



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