

Bowman tree cutting delayed a year

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A Bowman Field area tree. Credit: Michael Hayman.

Any tree cutting near Bowman Field to give airplanes more room during landings and take-offs won't like happen until 2014, airport officials said.

When [the plan](#) was announced a year ago, prompted by a crackdown of airspace rules by the Federal Aviation Administration, Louisville Regional Airport Authority officials said the cutting or trimming could occur as early as next month.

“The FAA has some new, very complex survey standards that are just being brought to bear,” said Charles T. “Skip” Miller, executive director of the authority, which oversees Bowman Field and Louisville International Airport. “It pushes everything back.”

Miller told me a consultant hired by the authority is wrapping up an aerial survey that will help the FAA decide which trees, buildings or other structures are considered a safety hazard.

The survey will go to FAA, which Miller said “has the authority to make determinations as to what obstructions must be removed and mitigated or which ones can stay.” He also said there will be an environmental analysis before any tree cutting will begin.

News of the tree cutting plan broke last December, raising a lot of concerns about the potential loss of trees extending as much as about a mile from the ends of each runway. Officials have insisted they have no idea how many trees might be affected. Others are worried it could be hundreds or as many as 1,000.

The airport authority's board of directors in February approved a \$5 million, five-year program to identify and remove or trim all trees that may be in expanded airspace safety zones off each of the airport's two runways.

The program also would include buying airspace easements above people's homes and replacing any lost tall trees with smaller ones.

FAA officials have said that as the airport's approach systems are modernized to be based on global-positioning systems, the new expanded airspace protections will be required. Bowman has a problem meeting those requirements because of trees in surrounding neighborhoods and parks, and the FAA last year closed one runway on nights when bad weather creates poor visibility.

Meanwhile, my colleague Martha Elson [writes that residents of Drayton Drive](#) next to Seneca Park and Bowman Field are not waiting to find out if or when their trees could be trimmed or removed as part of the so-called Bowman Field Airport Area Safety Program.

Residents are going ahead and creating an arboretum of about 16 trees that would grow to only about 30 feet.

Critics of the cutting are still [maintaining a Facebook](#) page to keep the public up to date. The [authority](#) says it will also post updates on its website.