



Action Item 13 - Adoption of Ordinance Amending Title 8 of the PAMC City Council June 6, 2022 Meeting

June 3, 2022

Dear Mayor Burt, Vice Mayor Kou, and Council Members,

Via email

We believe that updating Palo Alto’s Tree Protection Ordinance is a top priority for the city. While the city’s tree canopy is mature, abundant, and vibrant, it is also at risk. Mature trees, especially native oaks, are being lost parcel-by-parcel due to development. In addition, neighborhoods face disparities in canopy cover, and climate-change impacts are already being felt. Now is the time for the city to adopt the proposed updates to Title 8.

It’s been over 20 years since the last substantive update to the Tree Protection Ordinance. As the attached table shows, the current Title 8 provisions are not as strong as comparable requirements in surrounding communities in terms of which trees are protected. The City Council and staff are taking important steps to bring Palo Alto’s ordinance up to date and align it with what neighboring cities have already implemented.

The reasons for protecting and planting trees are clear. The urban tree canopy is one important nature-based solution to climate change. Trees sequester carbon, combat the urban heat island effect, and cool buildings. Neighborhoods well-shaded with street trees can be up to 6-10 degrees cooler than neighborhoods without.

In addition to their climate-change benefits, urban trees prevent soil erosion and stormwater run-off, provide wildlife habitat, and promote walking and biking on city streets. As recent scientific studies show, they also play a significant role in improving public health—enhancing physical and mental health and social well-being. Trees provide a substantial return on investment and, even in times of drought and budget tightening, are worth their water and maintenance.

With the proposed changes, the Tree Ordinance will be a more useful and meaningful tool to preserve and grow Palo Alto's urban forest. Among the many ordinance improvements, the update:

Support for Title 8 Update - Palo Alto Tree Protection Ordinance
City Council June 6, 2022 Meeting

- *Expands the list of protected species in section 8.10.020.* The current ordinance protects only three species, meaning that many of the city's beautiful trees on private property are completely vulnerable to harm or removal. More native species need protection, as do desirable and substantial nonnative trees.
- *Improves and clarifies protected tree removal permit processes.* Section 8.10.050 of the update provides clear criteria to guide decision making for protected tree removal permit applications in the absence of development and under different development scenarios. Section 8.10.140 clarifies the processes for applications, public notice, and appeals.
- *Simplifies and enhances the requirement to replace trees.* When a protected tree is lost for any reason—whether on public or private property—there is loss of all of the community and environmental benefits that the tree afforded, as well as a decrease in the city's canopy. One of the city's Urban Forest Master Plan policies is to strive for no net loss or, better yet, an increase in the city's canopy cover. Consistent with this policy, when a protected tree is lost, it should be replaced. We support staff's proposed change in section 8.10.055(b), which requires tree replacement under all scenarios of property development.

Over the last nine months more than fifty community members expressed their strong support for this important update either in writing or at City Council and commission and board meetings. We urge you to vote Yes!

Best regards,



Catherine Martineau
Executive Director
Canopy



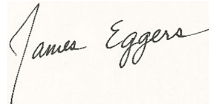
Lauren Weston
Executive Director
Acterra



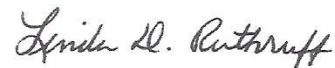
Trish Mulvey
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CLEAN South Bay



Annie Yang
Environmental Action Committee Chair
Santa Clara Valley Audubon Society



James Eggers
Executive Director
Loma Prieta Chapter Sierra Club



Linda Ruthruff
Conservation Chair
California Native Plant Society
Santa Clara Valley Chapter



Brian Schmidt
Policy and Advocacy Director
Green Foothills



Alexandra Von Feldt
Executive Director
Grassroots Ecology

CC Ed Shikada, City Manager; Peter Gollinger, Urban Forester

LOCAL TREE ORDINANCE COMPARISON

CITY	PROTECTED TREES - SPECIES	PROTECTED TREES – MINIMUM DIAMETER*	NUMBER OF SPECIES PROTECTED	CITATION
East Palo Alto	all species	8.0"	all	East Palo Alto Municipal Code Council approved updates 5/3/22
Los Altos	all species	15.3"	all	Los Altos Municipal Code § 11.08.040
Menlo Park	oaks native to California other species	10" 15"	all	Menlo Park Municipal Code § 13.24.020(5)
Mountain View	oaks, redwoods, cedars other species	3.8" 15.3"	all	Mountain View Municipal Code § 32.23.c
Redwood City	all species	12.1"	all	Redwood City Code of Ordinances § 35.1
Sunnyvale	all species	12.1"	all	Sunnyvale Municipal Code § 19.94.030
Palo Alto (current)	coast live oaks, valley oaks coast redwoods	11.5" 18"	3	Palo Alto Municipal Code § 8.10.020(j)
Palo Alto (proposed)	4 native oaks, bigleaf maples, incense cedars coast redwoods others except invasive species & high water users	11.5" 18" 15"	all except invasive species & high water users	Palo Alto Municipal Code § 8.10.020(l) (proposed - 06/06/22)

*Measured 54" above ground except Los Altos (48") and Redwood City (6-36")



Prepared by Canopy - June 2022