
From: Ann Balin <alafargue@mac.com>
Sent: Monday, April 25, 2022 5:40 PM
To: ParkRec Commission
Subject: Tree Ordinance

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Chair Greenfield & commissioners,

Thank you for your careful attention to the revised tree ordinance for Palo Alto before you.

As you know the present ordinance is outdated and needs to be strengthened. Palo Alto is known for our exceptional canopy. I urge you to protect these trees that enhance our wellbeing and are admired by visitors who come to our town. The provenance of this canopy is rich with natives as well as trees from other places including Mexico, China and other parts of the US.

When residents brought in the esteemed consulting arborist Barrie Coate to speak at California Avenue — the city only then agreed to work with Dave Muffly who proposed the Linden tree design. The residents participated in a solution under Muffly's tutelage to restore trees to the avenue. Beforehand the city had not engaged with residents and in fact did not follow city rules to notify neighbors of the removal of trees (oaks) on the avenue. The city had only engaged merchants who wanted the oaks removed. I share this history because residents care deeply about our arboreal tradition and secured the revered Coate to consult after the blow of the denuded avenue to the community.

I grew up in Palo Alto in Los Arboles with cork oaks. My dad grew up in College Terrace after moving south from Ross and San Francisco. His family planted two redwoods in 1926. They also planted deodaras. I am always impressed by the splendid arboretum of Oaks (los Robles) at Stanford. The oak in Mediterranean culture is the symbol of Zeus (strength). It was under an oak that Abraham gave hospitality to God in human form and two of his angels, who were disguised as travelers. I mention these references to demonstrate the importance of the oak in culture throughout human history.

Please respect the careful attention and work that has gone into the revised tree ordinance. I agree with the program utilized by the city of Menlo Park whereby arborists are vetted and then signed on. This updated ordinance will further the protected trees category which is long overdue. Expanding our canopy is essential in reducing carbon dioxide from the atmosphere.

The Parks and Recreation Commission is one of the most respected in the city. Please endorse this carefully researched tree ordinance to keep our town's heritage for future generations.

Respectfully,

Ann Lafargue Balin

From: Claire Elliott <claire@grassrootsecology.org>
Sent: Monday, April 25, 2022 5:50 PM
To: ParkRec Commission
Subject: Comments on Tree Ordinance Update
Attachments: Tree Ordinance Comments by Claire Elliott 4-25.pdf

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Hello Commissioners,

Please see my attached letter with comments. I want to applaud the efforts to make the ordinance stronger and I would love to see even more species added to the protected list. It is important to remove the wording in the weed section of the ordinance that includes "indigenous grasses" in the definition of weeds. Line #2 is no longer needed and could be struck as there is a new line 3 that addresses fire concerns.

Thanks for your attention to this important matter!

Claire Elliott

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Claire Elliott, Senior Ecologist	
	3921 East Bayshore Road Palo Alto, CA 94303-4303 Phone: 650-419-9880 grassrootsecology.org

Parks and Recreation Commission
ParkRec.commission@cityofpaloalto.org

April 25, 2022

Dear Parks and Recreation Commission members,

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the proposed changes to the city's tree ordinance. I applaud the efforts of staff and the ad hoc group to broaden protection of trees. I have worked 15 years as a Senior Ecologist with Grassroots Ecology. In that role, I have lots of experience in urban ecosystems increasing native populations of trees that support wildlife and also controlling weedy species that do not provide that support. The proposed changes go a long way to improving urban ecosystems, however, I do have a few comments for making the code even better.

I am delighted that the revised code adds two species of oaks, bigleaf maples and incense cedars but hope that can also protect other species that are important members of our local ecosystem. In order of priority, I would like to see added:

- California Buckeye, *Aesculus californica*,
- Western Sycamore, *Platanus racemose*,
- Box Elder, *Acer negundo*,
- Hollyleaf Cherry, *Prunus ilicifolia*,
- Northern California Black Walnut, *Juglans hindsii*, and
- California Bay Laurel, *Umbellularia californica*

Palo Alto could go even further and "keep up" with southern California by adopting a tree protection ordinance like [Los Angeles's](#) that protects a list of indigenous **trees and shrubs** measuring **four inches or more**. Their tree list includes all oaks other than scrub oak and black walnut, western sycamore and California bay laurel. Their protected shrubs include toyon and elderberry.

I am absolutely delighted that revisions to the code includes an exception for protected trees that are "invasive" as defined by the California Invasive Plant Council. People do not often think trees can be weeds. I have observed large areas claimed by "volunteer" trees that coevolved with wildlife on a different continent, and provide little, if any, habitat value. These are indeed weeds and making it easier for people to remove them is critically important for the health of our ecosystems.

As a side comment, I would like to encourage the city as possible, to find funding to manage the weedy trees that have planted themselves on city property. This includes

hundreds of glossy privets that have planted themselves as street trees. I have documented many in the Ventura neighborhood where I live. I would like to see an educational campaign to inform the community how to control these species when they are in the seedling or sapling stage when it is quite easy. To this goal, I wrote a [blog](#) for Grassroots Ecology's website about identifying them and controlling the damage they do.

Last but not least, an important change is needed to the definition of "weed." Please ask staff to remove item (2) from the weed definition that includes "**indigenous grasses.**" Item 2 seems redundant with new item 3 and sets a bad precedence by labeling indigenous grasses as weeds.

Most indigenous grasses are perennial grasses have long lives, and deep filamentous roots that help infiltrate rainwater, and sequester carbon. They burn less readily than invasive annuals as they stay green longer in the year. They also provide seed for birds, pollen for bees and are a host plant for important baby bird food (caterpillars.)

Thanks again to the staff and ad hoc committee members and to the ARB for the time taken to study and improve the city's tree protection ordinance.

Sincerely,

Claire Elliott

Claire Elliott, Senior Ecologist, Grassroots Ecology

From: Melanie Grondel <mel.grondel@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, April 26, 2022 12:33 AM
To: ParkRec Commission
Cc: Melanie Grondel
Subject: Support for the Proposed Update of the Tree Ordinance

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Dear Parks and Rec Commission,

I have followed the changes proposed in the update for the Tree Ordinance. In particular I do support the increased protection of tree species in addition to the already protected Oaks and Redwoods that have reached significant measurements as specified in the proposed update of the Tree Ordinance. The large trees are our treasures, as such they need and are entitled to care and maintenance.

With increasing development and growing density we need to maintain our Canopy. First of all maintain the trees that we have. We need to fill in and plant trees to maintain the canopy where new developments are started and increase the canopy where it is getting sparse. Removing a fully grown tree is a significant loss to the residents of this city, that cannot be replaced with a young tree, a bush or worst of all, paving. The Landscape and Tree Technical Manual needs to be well publicised. It needs to be part of new development projects and of existing property management and home maintenance.

I prefer to carrot over the stick, I strongly support educational programs for all of the public that includes fun for adults and kids, so people come to love the trees as their friends, that provide cool shade and beauty in all seasons; friends that are well worth the care and water in seasons of drought whether they are a yard tree or a street tree or a tree in the park. Parks, in particular, provide an important opportunities to teach kids and adults alike the importance and usefulness of trees for shade, for healthy air to breathe and for helping us mitigate climate change.

We need to truly see and feel the connection to trees. The Tree ordinance and the proposed changes need to be the guide and the enforcement, if necessary. In case of conflict the tree needs our updated professional tree care expertise and full consideration since a tree has invested generations of growth during droughts and challenging conditions. A venerable tree is a treasure that cannot be replaced. We need the updated Tree Ordinance to help construct tree protective solutions and enforce them as needed. Furthermore we need guidance in planting new trees in between our current trees, that are well adjusted to the new drought conditions and higher temperatures, so they can become our canopy of the future. The updated Tree ordinance can provide this guidance.

A healthy tree canopy provides fresh air to breath, cool shade and a cool city that invites walking and biking throughout. Parks full of shade and beauty provide the respite for play and relaxation, essential to our mental well being.

This is how we can face and mitigate climate change. The updated Tree ordinance is the best tool we have to accomplish this critical goal.

Thank you for your consideration,
Melanie Grondel
College Terrace
Palo Alto

From: Joseph Hirsch <jihirschpa@comcast.net>
Sent: Tuesday, April 26, 2022 8:37 AM
To: ParkRec Commission
Cc: Ann Balin; Martineau, Catherine; Marty Deggeller
Subject: Fwd: Tree Ordinance

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Dear Commissioners,

I wholeheartedly second Ann Balin's very thoughtful comments below.

In addition, I was for many years a Board member of Canopy Trees for Palo Alto (now Canopy) around the time of its inception more than 25 years ago. After leaving the Board I have been a long-time supporter of the organization and what it has done, and continues to do, for Palo Alto and the mid-Peninsula community. I have not participated in the review/revision of the Tree Ordinance, but representatives of Canopy have been. As Canopy supports adoption of the updated Tree Ordinance, then I do as well and urge you to endorse it as well in your official capacity.

Respectfully submitted.

Joe Hirsch
Georgia Avenue
Palo Alto

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From: Ann Balin <alafargue@mac.com>
Date: 25 April 2022 at 17:40:10 GMT-7
To: ParkRec.commission@cityofpaloalto.org
Subject: Tree Ordinance

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Respectfully,

Ann Lafargue Balin

From: Catherine Martineau <catherine@canopy.org>
Sent: Tuesday, April 26, 2022 10:01 AM
To: ParkRec Commission
Cc: O'Kane, Kristen
Subject: Canopy comments on Title 8 Updates
Attachments: Canopy's comments on Title 8 - PRC 4-26-22.pdf

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Dear PRC Commissioners,

Please find Canopy's comments on the proposed updates to Title 8 (Tree Ordinance) in attachment.

Do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions or concerns.

Thank you,

Catherine



Catherine Martineau (she/her)
Executive Director
Working from home
cell: 650-575-5310
We're hiring!





**Canopy Comments on Proposed Updates to Title 8 – Palo Alto Tree Protection Ordinance dated 3/30/22
Palo Alto Parks and Recreation Commission April 26, 2022 Meeting**

April 26, 2022

Dear Commissioners,

Via email

Re: Proposed Updates to the Palo Alto Tree Protection Ordinance (Title 8)

Canopy believes 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 the only 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:

Canopy comments on the proposed Title 8 - Palo Alto Tree Protection Ordinance dated 3/30/22 **1**
Parks and Recreation Commission April 26, 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. Canopy supports staff's proposed change in section 8.10.055(b), which requires tree replacement under all scenarios of property development.

Thank you for devoting your time to this important issue. Canopy stands ready to help in any way to ensure that work on this overdue update is completed in June. Please do not hesitate to contact us with questions or concerns.

Best regards,



Holly L. Pearson
Board Member
Chair of the Canopy Advocacy Committee
holly.pearson@gmail.com



Catherine Martineau
Executive Director
catherine@canopy.org

CC Jodie Gerhardt, Manager of Current Planning
Peter Gollinger, Acting Urban Forester

LOCAL TREE ORDINANCE COMPARISON

CITY	PROTECTED TREES - SPECIES	PROTECTED TREES - MINIMUM DIAMETER*	NUMBER OF SPECIES PROTECTED	CITATION
East Palo Alto	all species	7.6"	all	<u>East Palo Alto Municipal Code § 18.28.040.B.2</u>
Los Altos	all species	15.3"	all	<u>Los Altos Municipal Code § 11.08.040</u>
Menlo Park	oaks native to California other species	10" 15"	all	<u>Menlo Park Municipal Code § 13.24.020(5)</u>
Mountain View	oaks, redwoods, cedars other species	3.8" 15.3"	all	<u>Mountain View Municipal Code § 32.23.c</u>
Redwood City	all species	12.1"	all	<u>Redwood City Code of Ordinances § 35.1</u>
Sunnyvale	all species	12.1"	all	<u>Sunnyvale Municipal Code § 19.94.030</u>
Palo Alto (current)	coast live oaks, valley oaks coast redwoods	11.5" 18"	3	<u>Palo Alto Municipal Code § 8.10.020(i)</u>
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	<u>Palo Alto Municipal Code § 8.10.020(i)</u> <i>(proposed - 3/30/22)</i>

*Measured 54" above ground except East Palo Alto (40"), Los Altos (48"), and Redwood City (6-36")



Prepared by Canopy - April 2022

