



City of Palo Alto

An Overview of Regulated Trees

The City of Palo Alto Municipal Code (PAMC) provides residents with the orderly protection of regulated trees through ordinances, policy, plan review and the tree technical manual regulations. Our regulated trees refer to all trees or groups of trees in the following three categories: 1) Protected trees, 2) Street trees, and 3) Designated trees.

Protected Trees (PAMC 8.10)

Trees currently protected are all coast live oak (*Quercus agrifolia*); valley oak (*Quercus lobata*) 11.5 inches or greater in diameter (36 inches in circumference measured at 54 inches above natural grade); coast redwoods (*Sequoia sempervirens*) 18 inches or greater in diameter (57 inches in circumference measured at 54 inches above natural grade); and Heritage Trees, individual trees of any size or species only designated as such by the Palo Alto City Council (note: a list of designated Heritage trees is kept on record with the City of Palo Alto Planning Division web page). For development that may be within the dripline of these trees, a tree preservation report, adding special protection notes on plans and on-site arborist inspections are required. Applications to remove a protected tree require Planning Division staff review, approval permit and the appeal period satisfied. For the purposes of environmental assessment, the Protected Tree category impacts should be identified in the Biological and Policy and Ordinances section of the checklist.

Street Trees (PAMC 8.04)

Street trees are all trees growing within the street right-of-way (publicly-owned), outside of private property. Regulation of these trees extends as far as the tree drip line. For development in the dripline of street trees, special protection fencing and a completed Public Works verification form is required. Applications to remove a street tree require Public Works Operations staff review and approval permit completed. For the purposes of environmental

assessment, the Street Tree category impacts should be identified in the Biological and Policy and Ordinances section of the checklist.

Designated Trees (PAMC 18.76.020)

The Designated Tree category includes all those on commercial or non-residential property, which are part of an approved landscape plan. The trees are associated with a development project that are specifically designated by the City to be saved and protected from impacts on either public or private property, as the subject of discretionary review of a project. A designated tree is a tree or groupings of trees that have a particular significance because of their function as a unique natural or other feature under the standard findings for review [Zoning Code, Palo Alto Municipal Code 18.76.020]. Major or minor changes requiring removal of these trees requires staff review and approval from the Planning Division. For development in the dripline of these trees, a tree preservation report, special protection plan notes and on site inspections are required. An application to remove a protected tree requires a Planning Division staff review and approval permit completed. For the purposes of environmental assessment, the Designated Tree category impacts should be identified in the Aesthetics and Policy and Ordinances section of the initial study checklist.

Disturbance and Removal of Regulated Trees

The Palo Alto Municipal Code and Tree Disclosure Statement form (TDS) requires specific information about existing trees to be submitted with applications for building permits, including site plans showing trunk diameter and accurate drip line of oaks and redwoods; all street trees within 30 feet of a site, and those overhanging from a neighboring property. In addition, any planned disturbance within a regulated tree drip line requires an arborist's assessment of protection measures.

This document and other criteria regarding Regulated tree removal, conditions for permit approval, forms, potential mitigation options and requirements for impacts to regulated trees and Frequently Asked Tree Questions (FAQ's) are specified in the Palo Alto Tree Technical Manual, Section 1.00-6.00, available on line at:

<https://www.cityofpaloalto.org/civicax/filebank/blobdload.aspx?t=60917.23&BlobID=51800>