



A Community Letter on Revising Sacramento's Tree Ordinances

July 22, 2016

Mayor and City Council
City of Sacramento, City Hall
915 I Street
Sacramento, CA 95814

Re: Tree Ordinance Hearing August 4, 2016

Dear Mayor and City Councilmembers:

In our communities, we hear repeatedly that large canopy trees are not being replaced or are replaced with small "lollipop" trees (not able to provide canopy), that park trees are not being maintained and not replaced when they are removed, that there is a need for equal canopy replacement when trees are removed, and that the City should require that new construction have setbacks in accordance with the current Urban Forest Management Plan (Chapter 6 Design pgs. 82, 83) which ensures protection of the tree canopy. We have reviewed the Tree Ordinance revisions with these concerns in mind.

Please note that our current Urban Forestry Management Plan (adopted in 1994) measured Sacramento's tree canopy at 28 percent and it set a goal of 50 percent canopy cover (p. 45). In 2014, Sacramento's tree canopy was measured as 23.66¹, more than a 15 percent decline in canopy coverage ($4.33/28 * 100$). This decline occurred despite thousands of new trees being planted. Something isn't working as intended.

We support a strong urban forestry resource as part of City government, and want to see the City's goals for the urban forest fully implemented. The Tree Ordinance update is a focal point for upgrading Sacramento's effort to promote and to protect the community's tree canopy. We want to be true to our General Plan and Climate Action Plan. (See attached copy of General Plan policies.)

Each of us reserves the opportunity to comment separately at the hearing on the staff report and other issues of concern. The request for changes presented in this letter represent a common denominator of concern by citizens and community groups. These are not new issues.

We appreciate the wisdom of updating and streamlining ordinances. We have participated in the ordinance review process and carefully considered staff's issues and objectives, which overlap but are not identical to community issues and objectives. The staff proposal should be augmented by council input that strengthens the City's protection and stewardship for our urban forest and particularly the

¹ Schwarz K, Fragkias M, Boone CG, Zhou W, McHale M, Grove JM, et al. (2015) Trees Grow on Money: Urban Tree Canopy Cover and Environmental Justice. PLoS ONE 10(4): e0122051. doi:10.1371/journal.pone.0122051

continuation and expansion of our tree canopy as directed by the 2035 General Plan Environmental Resources (ER 3.1.1–3.1.9 attached). Also, the Climate Action Plan 2012 (page 4-72) identifies a commitment to annual planting of new trees, new trees in parks and a Tree Master Plan for Downtown.

We agree that the Urban Forestry Management Plan from 1994 requires updating. However, it has many strong principles and guidelines that should be retained in order for Sacramento to enhance its tree canopy as required by the General Plan. We look forward to participating in the update of the Urban Forestry Management Plan.

Regarding the ordinance revise, the issues below remain after a long and arduous review process with the Law and Legislation Committee. We bring them to your attention because we believe they are minimum requirements for a protective tree ordinance. These are intended as language to be added to the ordinance.

Requested Additions to the Revised Tree Ordinance

1. TO TIGHTEN CRITERIA USED TO JUSTIFY A TREE REMOVAL, ADD THE FOLLOWING:

- When considering the removal of any tree, the City shall consider the benefits of its tree canopy in accordance with the General Plan Environmental Resources Policy 3.1.2 (Enhance the City's Tree canopy).
- If only poor health or potential structural damage is justification for removal of a tree, a certified arborist or engineer report documenting these factors shall be required by the Director.
- Director shall find “there are no modifications or revisions to the proposed use that would effectuate its basic project objectives and also preserve the protected tree” before approving removal of private protected tree. (Similar language in staff draft would be required for removal of a city tree (see 12.56.050 Tree Permits., C, and 12.56.040 Removal of city trees - Public projects A).
- Director shall find that the tree proposed for removal is neither a mitigation tree nor a tree previously required as part of project approval before approving removal of a private protected tree.

2. TO ENSURE ACCOUNTABILITY FOR REMOVAL OF CITY TREES, ADD THE FOLLOWING:

- The City shall contract with a independent ISA certified arborist to provide independent review for appeal of non-emergency tree removal decisions made by a Director of the City, staff level approvals, and to hear appeals delegated by the City Council.
- Amend 12.56.050 Tree Permits. Section I as follows:
Tree removal permits for private projects are not transferable and may not be issued until a building permit is pulled and the project proponent presents adequate evidence that financing for the project is assured.
- The City shall present to Council an urban forest report at least once every two years that includes data on tree removals and replacements, enforcement activities, and the

status of city trees. The report shall include the status of the City's overall tree canopy and canopy by community plan area.

3. TO MAKE TREE REMOVAL NOTIFICATIONS MORE TRANSPARENT, ADD THE FOLLOWING:

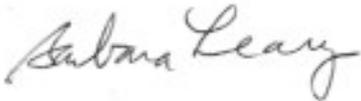
- The City shall make available to the public a listing of all proposed public and private tree removals being considered by the City and the status of each.
- If a tree with a circumference of 100 inches or more is requested for removal, neighborhood associations shall be notified.
- Any notice of proposed tree removal posted on the tree or elsewhere shall state that an appeal or objection process is available regarding the decision to remove a city tree or a private protected tree, and the final date for filing an objection or appeal.

Thank you for this opportunity to review and comment on the proposed tree ordinance revision. We urge you to adopt our recommended additions to strengthen the protections for the urban forest in the new ordinance. You may respond to this letter by email to trees4sacto@sbcglobal.net and we will distribute any response to the signatories below.

Sincerely,



ECOS, Stakeholder



Sierra Club Sacramento, Stakeholder



350 Sacramento



and

Janet Maire
East Sacramento
Preservation
President

East Sacramento Preservation, Stakeholder

Jody Adcock
President
Hagginwood Community
Association

Bonnie Hansen

VP, Elmhurst Neighborhood Association

Dale T. Steele

Dale Steele, Friends of Sutter Landing Park

Surie Stepan

President, Upper Land Park Neighbors, Stakeholder

Barbara Thalacker

Barbara Thalacker, Stakeholder, District 4

Judith Lamare and James Pacht

Judith Lamare and James Pacht, co-founders, Friends of the Swainson's Hawk, Stakeholder

Sean Ward

Sean Ward, Sutter Land Park Neighborhood

Karen Jacques

Midtown Neighborhood

Gretchen Steinberg

Gretchen Steinberg, South Land Park Neighborhood



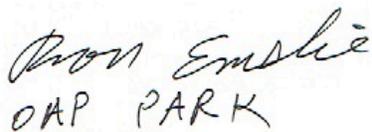
Pauline Hutton, Greenhaven Neighborhood and Friends of Capitol Towers and Villas



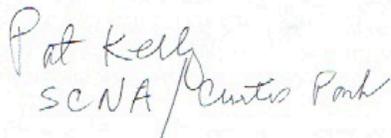
PJ Baisley, East Sacramento Neighborhood



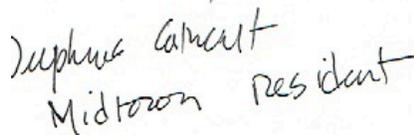
Elmhurst Neighborhood



BRON EMSHIE
OAP PARK



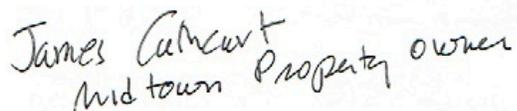
PAT KELLY
SCNA / Curtis Park



DUPHUS CALVERT
Midtown Resident



WILLIAM A. GROSS
Midtown resident



JAMES CALVERT
Midtown Property owner

Earl Agomarsino Campus Commons Resident

Jan Summers Campus Commons Resident

Kate Riley River Park Resident

Jan Wooley
River Park Resident

2035 Sacramento General Plan Adopted March 3, 2015 GOAL ER 3.1

Urban Forest

Manage the city's urban forest as an environmental, economic, and aesthetic resource to improve Sacramento residents' quality of life.

Policies

ER 3.1.1 Urban Forest Management Plan

The City shall maintain and implement an Urban Forest Management Plan. (MPSP)

ER 3.1.2 Manage and Enhance the City's Tree Canopy

The City shall continue to plant new trees, ensure new developments have sufficient right-of-way width for tree plantings, manage and care for all publicly owned trees, and work to retain healthy trees. The City shall monitor, evaluate and report, by community plan area and city wide, on the entire tree canopy in order to maintain and enhance trees throughout the City and to identify opportunities for new plantings. (RDR/MPSP/SO)

ER 3.1.3 Trees of Significance

The City shall require the retention of City trees and Heritage Trees by promoting stewardship of such trees and ensuring that the design of development projects provides for the retention of these trees wherever possible. Where tree removal cannot be avoided, the City shall require tree replacement or appropriate remediation. (RDR/MPSP)

ER 3.1.4 Visibility of Commercial Corridors

The City shall balance the tree canopy of the urban forest with the need for visibility along commercial corridors, including the selection of tree species with elevated canopies. (RDR)

ER 3.1.5 Solar Access

The City shall promote plantings and tree placement recognizing solar access for alternative energy systems may be limited. (RDR/PI)

ER 3.1.6 Urban Heat Island Effects.

The City shall continue to promote planting shade trees with substantial canopies, and require, where feasible, site design that uses trees to shade rooftops, parking facilities, streets, and other facilities to minimize heat island effects. (RDR/PI)

ER 3.1.7 Shade Tree Planting Program

The City shall continue to provide shade trees along street frontages within the city. (MSPS)

ER 3.1.8 Public Education

The City shall promote the importance and benefits of trees and of the urban forest through awareness, partnerships, and efforts that educate residents on the best methods of planting and maintaining trees. (IGC/JP/PI)

ER 3.1.9 Funding

The City shall provide adequate funding to manage and maintain the city's urban forest on City property, including tree planting, training, maintenance, removal, and replacement. (SO/FB)