



TREE REMOVAL PERMIT PROCESS

As outlined in the City's Tree Protection Ordinance (*LAMC Chapter 11.08*), all trees, regardless of species, that are 48-inches or larger in circumference (approx. 15-inches in diameter) are protected and require a Tree Removal Permit before they can be removed. The purpose of the Tree Protection Ordinance is to preserve and maintain the City's urban forest and rural character by retaining and/or replacing large mature trees when possible and where appropriate.

Removal requests for trees on private property are processed by the Community Development Department and removal requests for trees located in a public street right-of-way or on City property are processed by the Public Works Department.

PROTECTED TREES

The following list of trees are protected and require City approval before removal and/or significant pruning can occur.

- Any tree that is 48-inches (four feet) or greater in circumference when measured at 48-inches above the ground.
- Any tree designated by the Historical Commission as a Heritage Tree or any tree under official consideration by the Historical Commission for a Heritage Tree designation.
- Any tree which was required to be either saved or planted in conjunction with a development review approval (i.e. new two-story house).
- Any tree located within a public right-of-way.
- Any tree located on property zoned other than single-family residential.

TREE REMOVAL CRITERIA

In order to evaluate a tree removal permit, evidence is required to document at least one of the following situations exist:

- The condition of the tree with respect to disease, imminent danger of falling, proximity to existing or proposed structures and interference with utility services.
- The necessity to remove the tree for economic or other enjoyment of the property.
- The topography of the land and the effect of the tree removal upon erosion, soil retention and the diversion or increased flow of surface waters.
- The number, species, size and location of existing trees in the area and the effect the removal would have upon shade, privacy impact, scenic beauty, property values and any established standards of the area.
- The number of healthy trees the property is able to support according to good forestry practices.
- The approximate age of the tree compared with average life span for that species.

If the information provided can adequately demonstrate that one or more of the above conditions exist, then staff can support the issuance of a tree removal permit. However, if there are reasonable alternatives that would allow for the preservation of the tree, if the tree contributes to the streetscape and/or neighborhood character, or if the tree provides privacy screening, then staff may request additional information, require replacement trees as part of the approval and/or deny the request.

REVIEW PROCESS

In order to initiate City review of a tree removal request, a complete Tree Removal Permit application and appropriate application fee must be submitted. If any portion of the tree trunk is on or over a property line, then both property owners will need to sign-off on the application before a permit can be considered. Support information such as an arborist report or other technical studies may be necessary to process a tree removal request. Once received, staff will review the application, conduct a site visit and review the application with the Community Development Director or their designee. The City's target processing time is 30 days, but this may vary depending on the Department's workload and staffing.

If a tree removal request is part of a development application such as a new house or addition/remodel, it will be reviewed as part of that application and a separate Tree Removal Permit application is not required. As such, staff will also not consider the approval of trees in advance of the approval of a development application unless there are extenuating circumstances such as the tree being dead or posing an imminent hazard.

PUBLIC NOTIFICATION AND APPEALS

Once the City issues a Tree Removal Permit, public notification shall be posted on the property for at least 10 days before the removal can occur. The tree removal notice and posting instructions will be provided by City staff when the permit is issued.

During this public notification period, the applicant or any interested party may appeal the approval to the City Council. If the City denies a tree removal request, this action may also be appealed to the City Council. An appeal must be submitted to the City within 10 calendar days of the decision by filing a written statement outlining the reasons for the appeal along with the appropriate appeal fee.

VIOLATIONS

Any actions to remove, damage or significantly prune a protected tree without City approval is considered a misdemeanor and shall be punishable as prescribed in Chapter 1.20 of the Municipal code. In addition, the action will be penalized as follows:

- Replacement of the unlawfully removed or damaged tree with one or more new trees which will provide equivalent aesthetic quality in terms of size, height, location, appearance and other characteristics of the unlawfully removed or damaged tree.
- Where replacement trees will not provide equivalent aesthetic quality because of the size, age or other characteristics, the value of the unlawfully removed tree shall be calculated in accordance with the latest edition of the Guide for Establishing Values of Trees and Other Plants and the City may fine the person up to double the value of the subject tree.

EMERGENCY WAIVERS AND EXEMPTIONS

The City will waive the standard review process and grant an Emergency Tree Removal Permit over-the-counter for the following situations:

- A hazardous or dangerous condition of a tree that requires immediate action for the safety of life or property; or
- A dead tree per verification from a licensed arborist or other appropriate documentation.

Public utilities, such as Pacific Gas & Electric, and agencies outside of the City's jurisdiction, such as a school district, are allowed to prune and remove trees as necessary to comply with safety regulations and as may be necessary to maintain a safe operation of their facilities without the necessity of applying for a tree removal permit.