



Administrative Report

N.3., File # 25-0070

Meeting Date: 1/21/2025

To: MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL

From: ANDREW WINJE, PUBLIC WORKS DIRECTOR
MARC WIENER, COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DIRECTOR

TITLE

DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE DIRECTION REGARDING MODIFICATIONS TO THE CITY'S TREE ORDINANCE

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In early 2023, the City Council discussed language for a new tree protection ordinance founded on contemporary municipal practices and the goal of building and preserving the City's urban forest. After significant discussion, the City Council on February 14, 2023, adopted an ordinance that addressed City owned trees, but did not include private property regulations. As part of the approval of the ordinance, the Council asked staff to return at a later date with an item to discuss additional restrictions and incentives that could be enacted to preserve and enhance privately owned trees. This item gives the Council an opportunity to give direction on possible modifications to the City's Tree Ordinance.

BACKGROUND

On January 17, 2023, the City Council provided direction to staff to prepare a Tree Preservation Ordinance that addressed the protection and enhancement of the City-owned trees that make up a portion of the City's urban forest. An ordinance was adopted on February 14, 2023 that became effective on March 16th of that year. The ordinance allowed the City to be designated as a "Tree City USA" by the Arbor Day Foundation, which was recognized by the City Council on June 4, 2024.

At the January 2023 meeting, consensus could not be reached regarding ways to codify and enforce the protection of privately owned trees, especially "heritage trees," which were defined in the proposed code language under consideration. The adopted motion directed staff to create an ordinance limited to City-owned trees and to return to the Council at a later date with a discussion item to facilitate further policy discussion regarding privately-owned trees.

Council recognized that both incentives and restrictions may be helpful in urging private property owners and developers to protect and enhance their trees. Council also inquired if the City can plant trees in front yards on private property when there was no available landscape area in the City owned parkway in front of the residence. The answer is yes, provided that the City has the owner's permission. The cost to plant a tree is nominal, about \$200 plus City labor, per location, for a 24-inch box tree. Actual costs are dependent upon site conditions and tree species. If the City was to plant trees on private property, with the owner's permission, staff recommends that the tree become owned by the property owner for future maintenance purposes.

Suggestions were raised at the prior City Council meetings regarding possible incentives to plant new trees, or protect existing mature trees, including credit towards developer fees or expedited processing through the entitlement process. Another potential incentive would be to allow for modified development standards, such as slightly higher floor area ratios or reduced setbacks.

It should be noted that the City's current development standards and City ordinance regulate landscaping to some extent and require landscaping in association with development applications, including drought tolerant plants and, in some instances, new trees. These standards are contained in Article 7 of Chapter 2 of Title 10, of the Redondo Beach Municipal Code (RBMC) §10-2.1900, and include preservation of existing mature trees if feasible, replacement of mature trees and inclusion of street trees in the landscape designs. In particular, applicants in R-1 zones with no parkways are expected to preserve existing mature trees, or include at least one tree in the property's front setback if mature trees cannot feasibly be saved or where no mature trees exist. RBMC §10-2.1900 requires that "planting areas shall be permanently maintained, including watering, weeding, pruning, trimming, edging, fertilizing, insect control, along with replacement of plant materials and irrigation equipment, as needed, to preserve the health and appearance of plant materials." This item provides the City Council an opportunity to discuss how these requirements could potentially be enforced.

Potential language for regulating existing trees on private property was included in the materials provided to Council on January 17, 2023. The adopted Ordinance and the draft language considered at the January 17, 2023 Council have been included for reference.

COORDINATION

This report was coordinated between the Public Works and Community Development Departments.

FISCAL IMPACT

There is no fiscal impact associated with this item.

APPROVED BY:

Mike Witzansky, City Manager

ATTACHMENTS

- Ord - No. 3251-23 Adding Chapter 11 to Title 5 of the Redondo Beach Municipal Code Establishing a Tree Protection and Preservation Law, February 14, 2023
- Ord - DRAFT Tree Protection Ordinance, January 17, 2023