The Venice Arbor Committee is very concerned about the decline in our tree canopy in recent years by property owners who are removing their property trees and also removing their adjacent street trees without a permit from Urban Forestry Division (UFD). These “by right” projects have no review by Planning and do not come before the neighborhood council; and though we can get LA Department of Building and Safety (LADBS) notifications when structures are proposed to be demolished, we have no input. Many of these properties are clearcut, and sometimes sit empty for months or years. This is creating an environmental, neighborhood and aesthetic problem. We propose a letter to City Council, the Mayor, LADBS, UFD, Grading Dept. and the Community Forest Advisory Committee requesting the following:

1. Code enforcement of 12.21 C. 1 (g) to be done by LADBS inspectors that at least one front yard tree be retained and no more than 50 percent of an existing front yard be used for driveway or motor court. Per UFD, palm trees are not technically trees and do not count as replacement trees; thus palm trees should not be counted as a yard tree.
2. A new ordinance to require that a tree report by a certified arborist be submitted for all trees on the property. An inspection by UFD should take place before an LADBS demolition permit be issued. The report should be compared with what trees show on the property on Google Maps an Google Earth to make sure trees are not removed prior to the report. No right of way trees should be removed without a permit from UFD. City Council needs to set fines and penalties for any property tree or street tree removals prior to the tree report and building permits withheld for a period of time to be set for non-compliance. LADBS code enforcers to cite any tree removals.
3. Plans along with the tree report need to be subject to a review by the Urban Forestry Environmental Planner to determine which trees can be built around.
4. In view of the fact that other cities retain trees when lots are demolished and rebuilt, we request a review of City grading requirements with respect to tree preservation to be done with comparisons to policies in other cities and new guidelines set.
5. Given the unsightly nature of vacant lots in the community, no demolition permits should be issued without approved building plans by LADBS for replacement structures.
6. All trees of 19” DBH or greater as well as the 6 native species of protected trees are to be retained. Under special circumstances these may go through the UFD tree removal permitting process and require replacement with native trees 2:1 on site. This will require a City Council ordinance for the non-native trees and inspection should be handled by LADBS with the consultation of UFD to provide tree knowledge.