



Pacific Palisades Community Council

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VIA EMAIL

December 1, 2023

Office of Councilwoman Traci Park,  
Attn:  
Kevin Brunke, Legislative Deputy  
Jacob Burman, Senior Advisor  
Jeff Khau, Planning Deputy  
Sean Silva, Field Deputy  
Michael Amster, Field Deputy

Re: Protecting Street Trees and increasing the tools in our toolbox to enforce laws

Dear Councilwoman Park and team CD11:

Today we write to you about our collective tree canopy, and in support of our friends in Brentwood and the BCC, who have written with common concerns about the wanton disregard of regulations surrounding tree removal, and the lack of enforcement of those infractions.

While Pacific Palisades Community Council (PPCC), the most broad-based organization in Pacific Palisades and the voice of the community since 1973, is on break until January, we have advocated for the protection of our tree canopy and have been partners with CD11 over the years in the effort to callout violators and enforce laws that are violated by unscrupulous developers who take advantage of the lack of enforcement by felling trees that pose an inconvenience to their development plans.

We have recently witnessed the willful disregard of existing tree protection laws and regulations by developers and private property owners in Pacific Palisades. Too many mature street trees in the public right of way and protected trees on private property have been removed or allowed to die by withholding water or by other destructive means, without permits. City agencies lack effective powers to stop this destruction of our urban tree canopy and life sustaining oxygen and habitat, or to administer effective fines, halt projects, revoke permits, or other after the fact enforcement.

One recent instance in the Palisades on Via de las Olas was egregious enough (multiple street trees removed without permit) that the building permit was suspended for a few weeks, replacement trees were ordered to be planted, and a bond posted. After he was ordered to replace the removed trees with 6 new ones, he let some of them die by withholding water. After replacing those, again, he has now removed some of them again. All these actions by the owner have been reported by the Palisades Forestry Committee (PFC) and PPCC to the Urban Forestry Division of StreetsLA and your office. We're waiting to see if any further action will be taken.

Recently, Brentwood Community Council asked Councilwoman Park to support a right of private action to protect trees. While PPCC has not taken a position on this matter, we plan to agenda it for board discussion in January. In the meantime, instances of disregard for city regulations surrounding tree protections are repeated regularly where development occurs. Driveways are designed to go where unwanted trees are located necessitating their removal, with or without a permit. Trees are not watered and die, or they just disappear during construction. This last Sunday, several street trees were removed at a house finishing construction on Corona Del Mar, which was stopped by alert neighbors, PFC, and PPCC, who sounded the alarm to your office, LAPD and other offices. LAPD enforcement is not a reliable tool because very few officers are allocated to Pacific Palisades and often have other priorities.

In short, the wanton destruction of trees is a serious detriment of our collective City tree canopy. We need a broad toolbox of laws, regulations and enforcement measures to curb the destruction of our urban tree canopy and the beauty of trees along our streets and on private property, and we ask that you help us develop that toolbox in order to make enforcement of our laws effective so as to pose a deterrent to bad actors.

Best, Maryam Zar  
PPCC President on behalf of the Executive Committee  
Dave Card, Chair Emeritus  
Sue Kohl, Vice President  
Jenny Li, Treasurer  
Beth Holden-Garland, Secretary  
Joanna Spak, Area Representative  
John Padden, Organizational Representative