

MOTION PUBLIC WORKS & GANG REDUCTI

The City Council has recently taken steps to better protect its wildlife areas, urban forest and biodiversity (CF#15-0499) and to prevent wildlife habitat fragmentation (CF#14-0518).

As well, the City has taken steps to protect its trees by instituting a Protected Tree Ordinance (Ord. #177404), whose stated aim was to establish standards for the preservation of four significant trees native to Southern California: indigenous Oak trees, Southern California Black Walnut, Western Sycamore, and California Bay. However, the ordinance has not accomplished its goal; protected trees are too easily removed under the current permitting process.

Trees provide vital ecosystem services, including absorbing carbon dioxide (which helps combat climate change), creating canopy shade and, by their roots, water retention, protecting soil health, preventing soil erosion and thereby helping prevent landslides, providing habitat for animals, insects and birds, producing oxygen, improving the livability of neighborhoods, the health of inhabitants, and increasing property values, among many others.

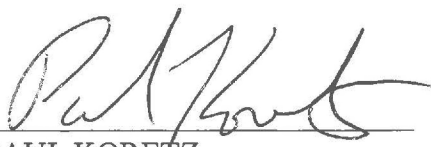
A healthy tree canopy is an essential component of the City's climate disruption resilience.


Unfortunately, trees are not being adequately protected and departments are not working well together to protect them. Trees are being cut before development permits are applied for, trees are not being protected during construction activities, and building permits are routinely issued without the Department of Building and Safety being aware of the presence of protected trees on the affected properties, all resulting in an accumulating net loss of trees, tree canopy and the accompanying ecosystem services across the City.

The City's Protected Tree Ordinance, while currently in line with state laws, is not of use if it is not as supported as it could be. City department enforcement is not currently fully in line with the underlying principles and intent of the ordinance.

I THEREFORE MOVE that Council instruct the Urban Forestry Division to work with the Planning Department and the Department of Building and Safety to convene and consult with stakeholder groups, including the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy, arborists, community groups, environmental groups like TreePeople, members of the Community Forestry Advisory Committee and the Mayor's expert biodiversity group, and report back within 75 days regarding recommendations for strengthening the Protected Tree Ordinance, including, but not limited to: determining methods to preserve overall native tree cover and habitat areas, limiting damage to trees retained during development, and possibly adding protected trees based on circumference and species notability.

PRESENTED BY:


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