

## **Additional Documents**

July 7, 2025 NREC Special Meeting

## **Additional Documents**

ITEM 2: Tree Ordinance Update Review

# **CITY OF SOUTH PASADENA**

## **PUBLIC WORKS**

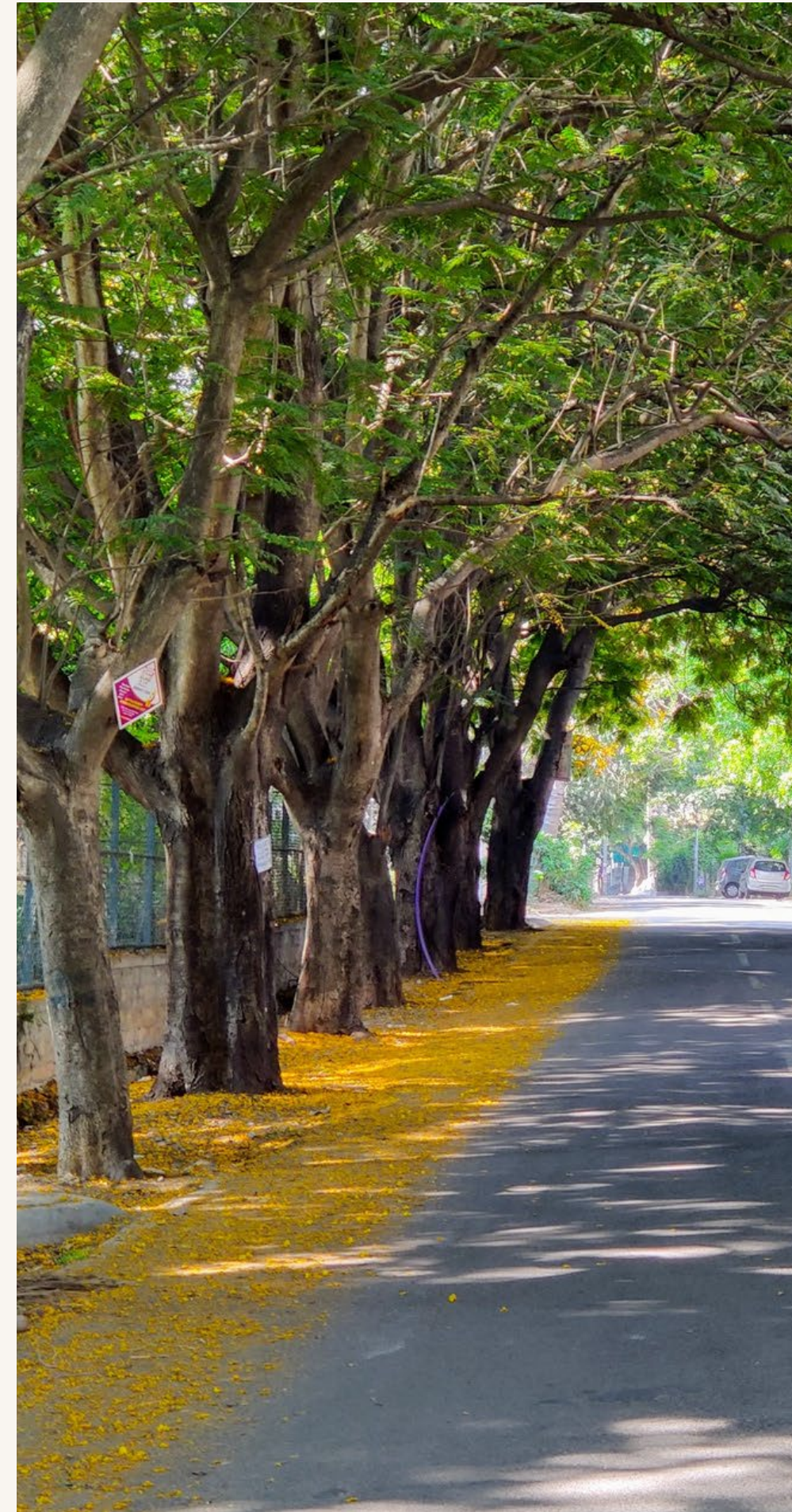
Tree Ordinance Revision

**Natural Resources & Environmental Commission**

**JULY 7, 2025**

# ORDINANCE REVIEW

- Review current ordinance and research neighboring city's similar policies and practices
- Establish recommendations for updating tree ordinance
- Specific direction from City Council to streamline the current tree removal/trimming permitting process
- Continually find ways to reflect the city's commitment to preserving its urban forest





# IDENTIFIED CHALLENGES

- Ambiguous definitions & language
- Outdated removal criteria
- Cumbersome permitting process
- Unrealistic replacement requirements
- Constrained enforcement tools



<b>2025 PERMITS AWARDED</b>	<b>52</b>
<b>CURRENT COSTS FOR PERMITS</b>	<b>\$141 - Inspection \$364/\$504 – Permit Fee \$424 - Replacement</b>
<b>AVERAGE MARKET COST OF 24 INCH BOX TREE</b>	<b>\$240 - \$600 *Including labor to plant</b>
<b>ESTIMATED TIME TO RECEIVE PERMIT</b>	<b>1-6 months</b>



# EXISTING REMOVAL CRITERIA

## SOUTH PASADENA MUNICIPAL CODE CHAPTER 34 - TREES & SHRUBS

### EXISTING CRITERIA [SECTION 34.11]

- (1) Where the tree poses a **reasonable** risk of injury or harm to persons or property or is **substantially** interfering with the structural integrity or the use of an existing structure (including, but not limited to, a fence or wall), swimming pool, or building **and there is no feasible and reasonable alternative to mitigate the interference.**
- (2) Where, upon taking into account the **size, shape, topography** and existing trees upon the lot, the denial of the permit would create an **unreasonable hardship** on the property owner. Redesign of any proposed development as an alternative to removal of an existing protected tree does not create **an unreasonable hardship.**
- (3) Where **a written determination** has been made by a certified arborist, after a visual inspection or scientific evaluation, that the tree is so diseased or damaged that it is no longer viable or is a threat to persons or property, including to other trees. The director or commission may waive the requirement for a certified arborist's written statement when the tree can reasonably be determined to be dead by a layperson's visual inspection or when, after conducting an inspection of the tree, the director determines that the tree poses an **obvious and imminent threat to life or property.**
- (4) For the removal of a significant or mature tree, where the proposed replacement tree(s) **are of greater value or provide greater benefits** than the tree proposed for removal.

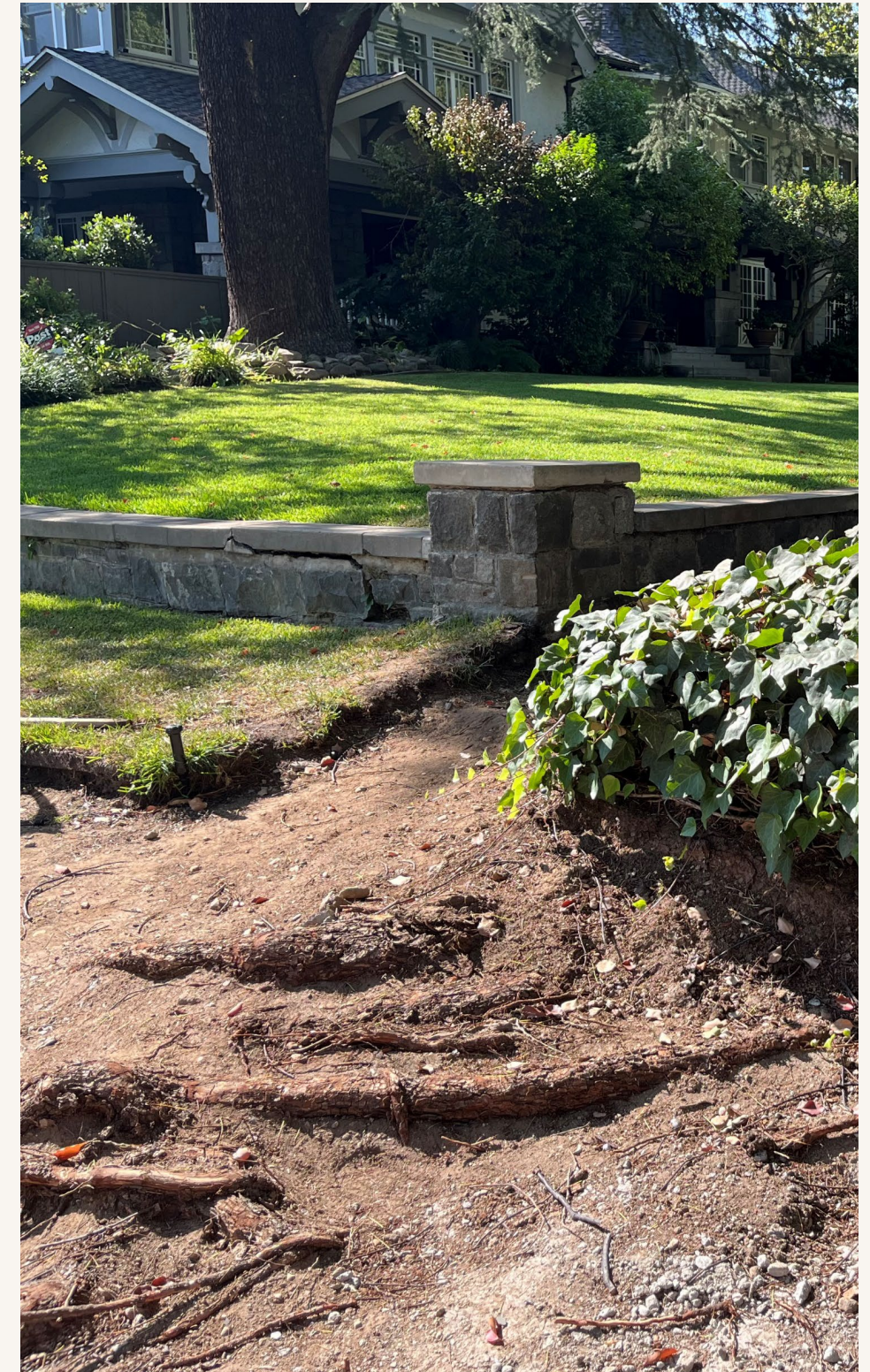




# PROPOSED REMOVAL CRITERIA

## **SOUTH PASADENA MUNICIPAL CODE CHAPTER 34 - TREES & SHRUBS**

- (1) Where the tree poses a risk of injury or harm to persons or property.
- (2) Where the tree is interfering with the structural integrity or the use of an existing structure.
- (3) Where the tree is dead, dying, or diseased. In such cases, only one replacement tree is required.
- (4) Where the tree is preventing a property owner from renewing homeowner's insurance and the property owner has provided evidence of a letter of cancellation.
- (5) Where a written determination has been issued by the Fire Chief or the Chief's designee that removal of the tree is necessary to achieve or maintain the defensible-space clearance required.





# STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS



1. Align ordinance with **City’s existing** Water-Efficient Landscape Ordinance and **State standards**.
2. Include language on **optimal seasonal timing for trimming “protected tree”** species.
3. Clearly **distinguish heritage trees** within the “protected tree” category.
4. Redefine the **category of “protected” trees** to align with the species of trees the City has **adopted by resolution 7360** to be considered native. **Revise tree trimming & removal permits to only be required for this category of “protected” trees.**
5. **Limit tree removal/trimming notification letters** to cases when the Director denies an application and an appeal is filed or for instances when the removal/trimming is **associated with land development**.
6. Integrate additional removal criteria to **address fire risk and insurance factors**.



# STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS

7. Eliminate **removal criteria** related to the **unreasonable hardship** to property owner by denial of the permit (34.11(a)(2)).
8. Eliminate **removal criteria** related to the **replacement trees being of greater value or benefit** (34.11(a)(4)).
9. Revise **the number of required replacement trees** for all tree removal applications. Allow **flexibility in replacement size** and require replacement trees to be “protected” species only.
10. Revise the ordinance to ensure that fees related to appeals for tree related permits are **incurred by the appellant**.
11. Revise ordinance to eliminate **subjective criteria in violation assessments**, enabling staff to apply enforcement consistently and fairly.
12. **Amend the ordinance to exempt the City and its contractors from the requirement to obtain tree removal or trimming permits.**





# SUPPLEMENTAL RESOURCES

*The goal of these items is to provide supplementary support along side the tree ordinance update and aim to improve clarity for residents as they navigate permitting.*

- Create **guideline/check list to streamline permitting criteria for trimming and removal**, providing clear guidelines early in the process.
- Utilize existing **City communication** channels to **promote tree care best practices**.
- Develop a comprehensive **Urban Forest Management Plan**.





# PROPOSED TIMELINE

- **MAY 27: NREC**
- **JUNE 9: Public Safety Commission**
- **JUNE 11: Public Works Commission**
- **JULY 7: NREC [Review of Final Staff Recommendations]**
- **JULY 16: Council Update [Commission Advisement]**
- **LATE SUMMER 2025: First Reading of Draft Ordinance**
- **FALL 2025: Second Reading of Ordinance**
- **WINTER 2026: Ordinance in Effect**

