



Steering Committee Meeting

November 17th, 2016

Policy Options: Geography, Tree Retention, Heritage and Significant Tree Sizing, and Trimming Regulations

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Project Goal

Amend the County's significant and heritage tree removal ordinances, and the Resource Management and Planned Agricultural District zoning ordinances to improve management of individual trees and the tree canopy in the County, and to improve tree removal and trimming permit process, consistent with the County's General Plan.



Steering Committee Goal

Collaborate with County staff by providing input and guidance that helps shape amendments to the County's ordinances governing tree protection and removal, in a manner consistent with the County's General Plan.



Purpose

Develop Common Understanding of Current Policies and Where They Apply

Review Current Policies and Policy Options Addressing:

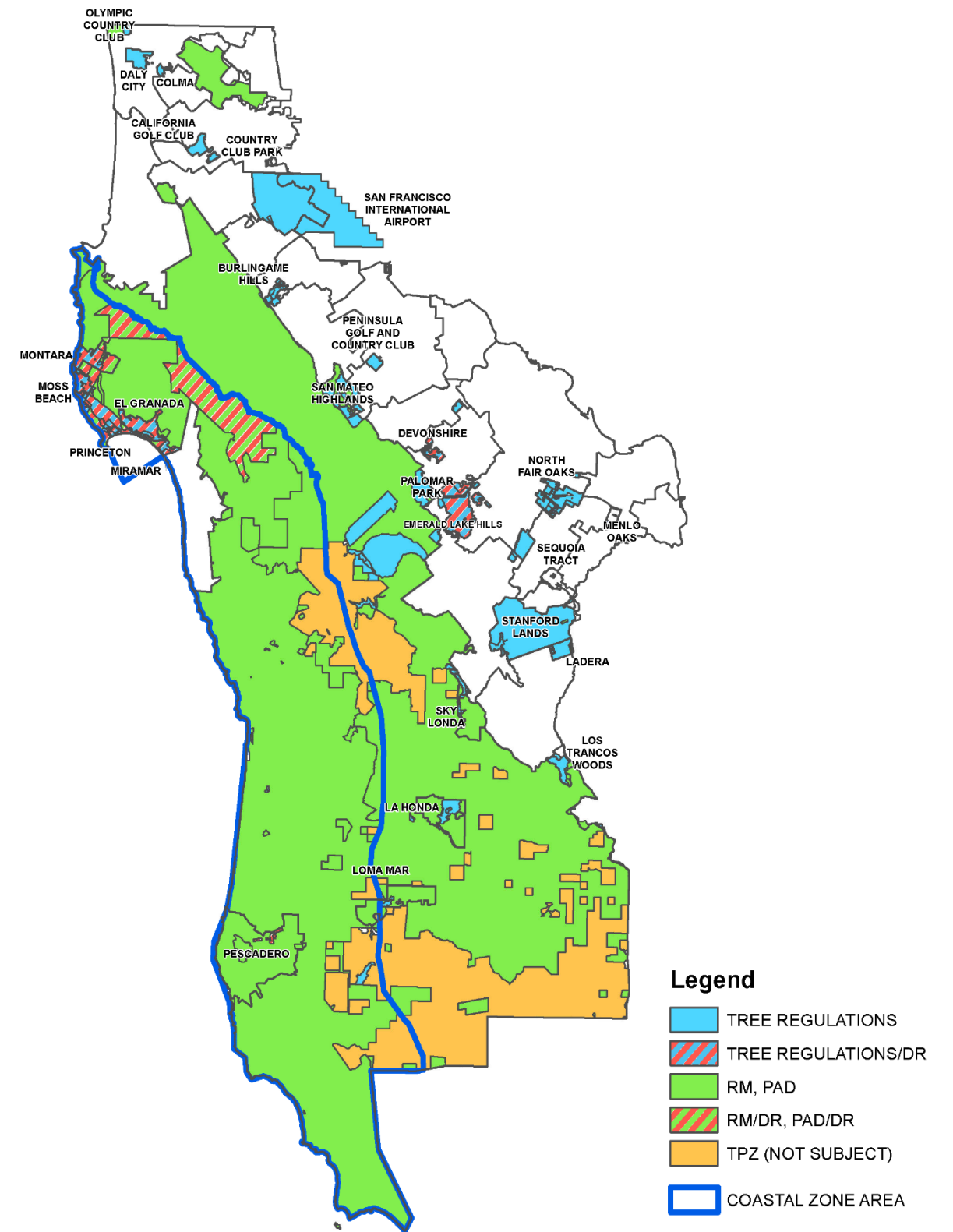
- Tree Retention;
- Protected Tree Standards; and
- Trimming





Policy Geography

- Significant and Heritage Tree Ordinances
- Design Review Policies
- Resource Management and Planned Agricultural District, Design Policies
- Local Coastal Program





Policy Geography

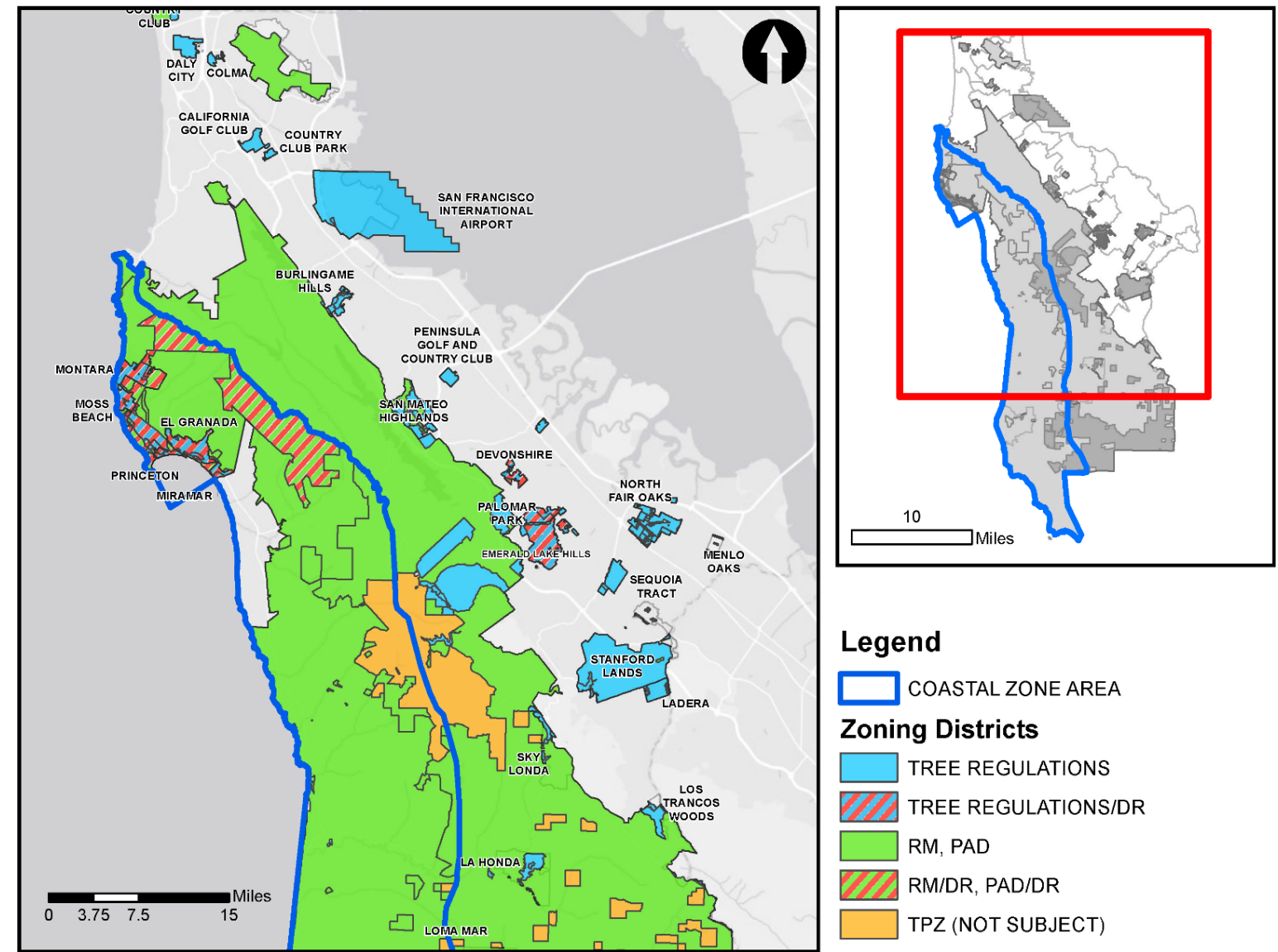
- Significant and Heritage Tree Ordinances
- Design Review Policies
- Local Coastal Program
- Resource Management and Planned Agricultural District, Design Policies

San Mateo County Tree Protection Policies Geographic Limits	
Policy	Geographic Extent
Regulation of Removal of Significant Trees and Regulation of the Removal of Heritage Trees	All Bayside Land Use Districts excluding RM, Skyline residential zoning districts, Midcoast “urban” areas and other coastside residential and commercial areas including LaHonda, Pescadero, Butano Creek, Loma Mar, and Dearborn Park
San Mateo County Zoning Regulation Chapter 28.1 DR	<u>Bayside</u> : Emerald Lake Hills/Oak Knoll Manor, Palomar Park, Devonshire, Middlefield Road and Commercial Properties <u>Coastside</u> : Resource Management Districts within the Coastal Zone near the Midcoast, “urbanized” and commercial and residential districts in Moss Beach, Montara, Princeton, El Granada, Miramar and Pescadero
County of San Mateo Local Coastal Program	Coastal Zone per California Coastal Act
San Mateo County Zoning Regulations Sections (Chapter 20.2 Resource Management Development Review Criteria and Chapter 28.1 Design Review Districts)	All lands zoned RM, RM/CZ, PAD, and PAD/CD



Geographic Summary

- Modest differences between urban and rural areas
- Generally protective
- Limited Application of DR Policies requiring project redesign
- Variation in tree sizes protected
- No species requirements in RM/PAD



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Policy Options for Tree Retention

- Since 1999, 3,227 significant trees and 81 heritage removed in County's jurisdiction
- About 200 large trees each year
- Younger trees grow larger and replacement trees are planted...but
- Community concerns: Policy Implementation and mitigation may not be adequate to replace lost values



Coast Live Oak



Valley Oak



Current Policies in San Mateo County

- Mix of regulations currently used to accomplish tree protection objectives
 - Heritage tree ordinance
 - Significant tree ordinance
 - Resource Management – Planned Agricultural Districts
 - Design Review overlay zone
 - Local Coastal Program – Coastal Zone



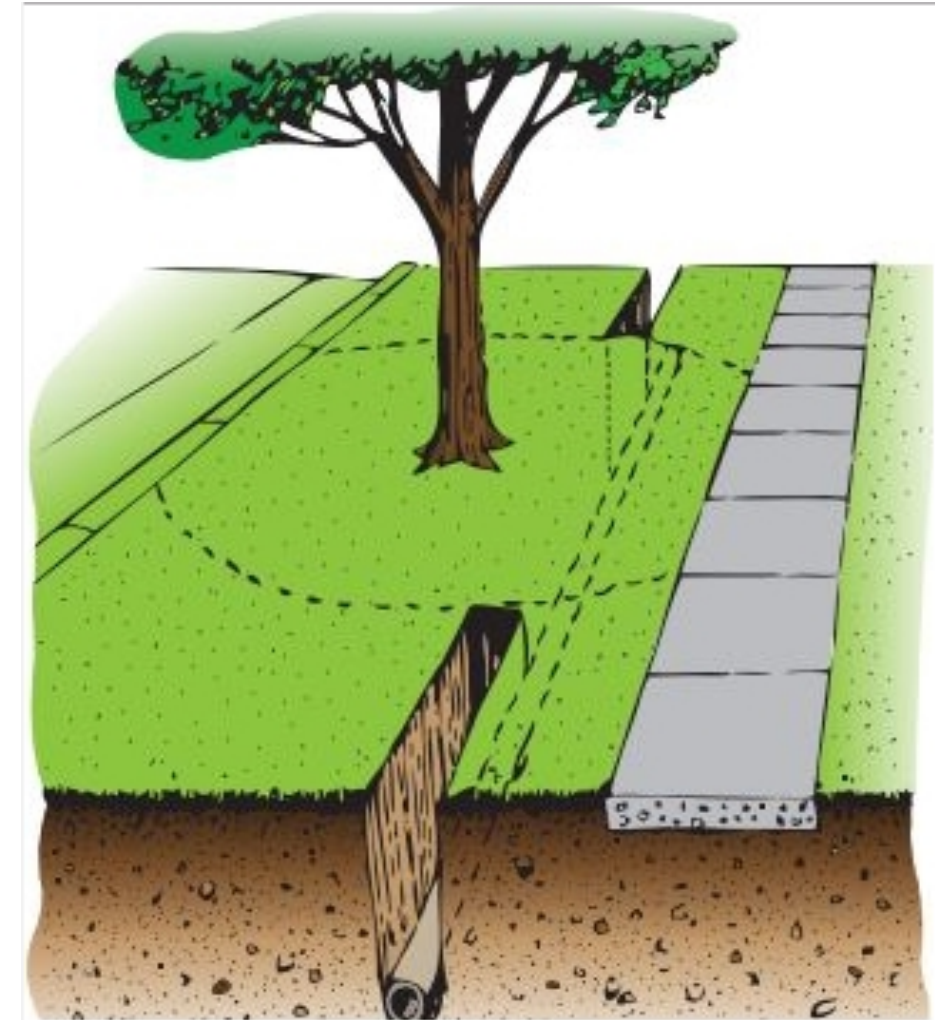
Map of County



Tree Protection Standards

What do we protect?

- Heritage Trees defined by species and size
- Significant Trees – 18-inch diameter @ DBH or 6-inch diameter @ DBH in RH
- All Trees 17.5-inch diameter in RM/PAD



Pacific Northwest ISA



Heritage Tree Ordinance

- Policies similar to Significant Tree Ordinance, **but** does allow meeting only one criteria for approving removal.

Relevant heritage tree ordinance criteria include:

- Proximity to existing or proposed structures, or utility services
- The necessity of the [removal] to construct improvements or otherwise allow economic or other enjoyment of the property
- Topography of the land and effect of removal on erosion, soil retention, water retention, and diversion or increased flow of waters



Urban Forest (image from LinkedIn)



Heritage Tree Ordinance

- Lacks reference to DR or LCP, but Heritage Tree ordinance is incorporated into LCP
- Protect trees to remain during construction



San Mateo County (image from The Registry)



Zoning Ordinance: Design Review District

- Site planning and structure placement must adhere to Section 6565.20(C): heritage and significant trees are to be retained, with special attention to healthy, native species; Removal of vegetation should be minimized to the extent necessary for construction of structures.
- DR zones Emerald Lake Hills, Palomar Park, Oak Knoll Manor, and Devonshire, trees 6 inches in diameter protected, other areas trees 12 inches in diameter protected; All DR Districts: **Minimize Tree Removal;**
 - In addition significant and heritage tree protections
- The project review processes in DR districts are the most effective tool the County currently has for ensuring the retention of trees in bayside communities, however these policies apply in very limited geographic areas. Significant pressure to allow development.



Resource Management & Planned Agricultural District

- Development shall not have significant adverse impacts on wildlife resources or habitat, should be located and designed so they are subordinate to the existing character of the site
- Consider microclimatic conditions and soil stability characteristics on sites where new development is proposed
- Trees with 17.5 inches in must be retained unless they pose a hazard or are permitted for removal **for authorized development**
- Mitigation required, but policies ambiguous



Image from The Mercury News



Local Coastal Program



Image from Coastside Land Trust

- “Locate and design new development to minimize tree removal”
- Incorporates Significant & Heritage Tree Ordinances: DR, RM and PAD zoning policies.”
- “Prohibit the removal of tree masses which would destroy the silhouette of the ridgeline or hilltop forms.”



Policy Options

Option #1: Allow Removal of Any Trees that conflict with Development

- Maximizes site planning flexibility, minimizes tree protection,
- Very unlikely because it involves a significant departure from current policies

Image from Coastside Land Trust



Policy Options

Option #2: Allow Relaxation of Standards to Facilitate Tree Retention

- Deviate from setbacks, reduce height;
- May meet with landowner objections, due to disruption of neighborhood character, or perceived special treatment
- Fire codes, Building codes or other applicable standards may limit options

Image from Coastside Land Trust



Policy Options

Option #3: Reduce Allowable Development Intensity to Preserve Trees

- Current limited policies for requiring redesign would have to be strengthened
- Degree of project change would vary based on site conditions, ,
- Very unlikely because it involves a significant departure from current policies

Image from Coastside Land Trust



Policy Options

Option #4: Incorporate Design Review Policies in Tree Protection Ordinance(s)

- Increases protection of Protected Trees (as defined in revised ordinance)
- May meet with landowner resistance, will limit development potential on sites with protected trees.

Image from Coastside Land Trust



Policy Options

Option #5: Combine Options 3 and 4

- Incorporate Design Review Policies in Tree Ordinance and Require Reduction in Development Intensity when necessary to protect trees
- Increases Tree Protections at the expense of development potential
- May make development more difficult to finance if land/improvement value ratio fails to meet lender standards

Image from Coastside Land Trust



Policy Options

Option #6: Increase Heritage Tree Protections; e.g., make the findings for allowing removal difficult to meet

Option #7 Require Protection of all Trees on site, unless all reasonable economic enjoyment of the property is prevented

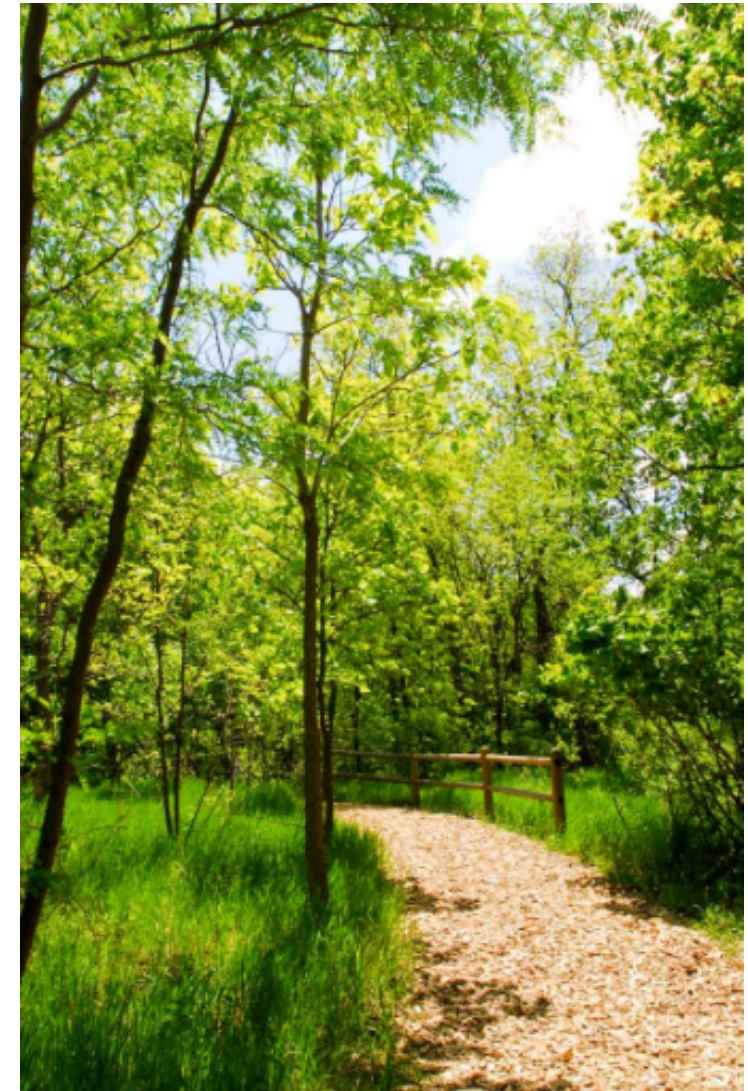
Image from Coastside Land Trust



Which Trees Should We Protect

What do we protect?

- Heritage Trees defined by species and size
- Significant Trees – 18-inch diameter @ DBH or 6-inch diameter @ DBH in RH
- All Trees 17.5-inch diameter in RM/PAD



Arbor Day Foundation



Policy Options

Option 1. No Change. Leave the thresholds for tree protection unchanged, Rely on other policy approaches, such as strengthening tree retention policies.

Option 2. Increase protection for native species by reducing the sizes of trees currently classified as heritage trees by reducing the size of some or all trees currently listed as heritage or trees in the RM/PAD zones.

Image from Coastside Land Trust



Policy Options

Option 3. Reduce the size of significant trees subject to protection policies.

Option 4. Combine Significant and Heritage Tree categories. The County could create one category of heritage trees with the current list of heritage tree sizes (perhaps adjusted lower) and specific sizes defining all other heritage trees, such as all trees 10-inch DBH and larger are heritage trees.

Image from Coastside Land Trust



Tree Trimming Standards

The existing County Tree Regulations differ on permitting requirements for tree trimming:

- The Heritage Tree Ordinance requires a permit to trim a Heritage Tree. However, the definition of “trim” is vague and does not provide standards for how much of a tree can be trimmed before requiring a permit.
- The Significant Tree Ordinance only requires a permit to trim a tree if the tree is located in the RH/DR zoning district (Emerald Lake Hills).





Tree Trimming Standards

Other local governments have adopted similar policies to protect valuable trees, with slight variations from San Mateo County's policies:

- The City of San Carlos requires a permit to remove or prune a “protected tree”. However, a clear definition of “prune” is not provided, ie. – the level of pruning/trimming that is exempt from permitting requirements is not clearly stated.
- The City of Burlingame requires a Protected Tree Permit that clearly identifies the work to be performed and reason why the work is necessary. The City's Urban Forest Management Plan then goes into extensive detail on pruning practices that should be adhered to by all persons seeking a Protect Tree Permit.



Tree Trimming Standards

Other local governments have adopted similar policies to protect valuable trees, with slight variations from San Mateo County's policies:

- The City of San Mateo requires a permit to “prune” any heritage tree. Prune is defined as: “Removal of more than one quarter of the crown or existing foliage of the heritage tree, or more than one third of the root system.”

Based upon Staff's continued review of surrounding jurisdiction's regulations, the general theme is that trimming/pruning requires a permit. However, not all jurisdictions clearly define “pruning”.



Tree Trimming Standards

Questions for the Workgroup:

- 1) Should the County extend its current tree trimming regulations to regulate the pruning/trimming of ALL significant size trees at ALL locations (not just in the Emerald Lake Hills Area)? (Trimming of Heritage trees already requires a permit).
- 2) Or should these additional regulations only apply to certain species of significant size trees (for example native oaks)?
- 3) Should we amend our definition of “Pruning” to something akin to the City of San Mateo’s definition, or utilize the existing 19” circumference standard from the Emerald Lake Hills area, but extended throughout the County?



Tree Trimming Standards

Questions for the Workgroup:

- 4) Should trimming policies require that permits for tree trimming be based on specified goals or outcomes for the pruning, such as
- Reduce risk from falling branches or major structural defects
 - Reduce/remove disease or pests
 - Reduce density of live branches
 - Provide necessary clearance
 - Increase light levels below and reduce wind resistance
 - Restore damaged trees



Tree Trimming Standards

Questions for the Workgroup:

- 5) Should policies refer to industry standards such as ANSI A300?
- 6) How should the County address the issue of “solar access”?



Thank you.

For more information about this project, please contact:

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