

# Oak Tree Permit Ordinance FAQs

The Oak Tree Permit Ordinance (OTP) was established to recognize oak trees as significant historical, aesthetic, and ecological resources, and as one of the most picturesque trees in Los Angeles County worthy of protection. Oak trees lend beauty and charm to the natural and designed landscape, enhancing the character and biodiversity of communities in which they exist.

The objective of the OTP is to preserve and maintain healthy oak trees in the development process. To achieve this objective, an Oak Tree Permit is required for any proposed development that will involve pruning larger branches and roots, encroaching within the protected zone, or removing protected oak trees.

## Which Trees are Protected?

The existing Oak Tree Permit Ordinance (OTP) protects all oak trees once they reach a protection threshold size. In Significant Ecological Areas, the Santa Monica Mountains Coastal Zone, and the Santa Monica Mountains North Area, oak trees with a trunk measuring 6" or more, as measured at 4.5' from the mean natural grade (DBH) are protected, while in the rest of LA County, oak trees with a trunk 8" or more (DBH) are protected. The OTP applies to all protected oak trees in unincorporated communities within LA County.

## What is an Oak Tree Permit?

The OTP allows pruning, encroachment, and removal of protected oak trees when avoiding impacts to oak trees is demonstrated to be infeasible.

## When Can Protected Oak Trees be Pruned without an Oak Tree Permit?

In the existing OTP, no permit is required for pruning oak tree branches and roots no larger than 2" in diameter.

## When Can Protected Oak Trees be Removed without an Oak Tree Permit?

If a protected oak tree appears to pose a safety hazard or if an oak tree may be infested with the Goldspotted Oak Borer (GSOB), notify the LA County Fire Department's Forestry Division. For hazards, call **(818) 890-5719**. For GSOB, call **(213) 442-9709**. A Forester will assess the tree and recommend actions to address the hazard and to protect the health of the tree. Emergency exemptions expire in 90 days.

## Why is the Ordinance Being Updated Now?

The LA County OTP was adopted by the Board of Supervisors in 1982. To ensure the objective of the ordinance is still being met, LA County Planning is initiating an update with outreach starting in Summer and Fall 2025.

To participate in the OTP update, sign up here for notifications: [bit.ly/oaktree-newsletter](https://bit.ly/oaktree-newsletter).

To give feedback on topic areas we are considering updating, fill out the survey: [bit.ly/oaktreesurvey2](https://bit.ly/oaktreesurvey2).

To contact LA County Planning about the OTP update, email us: [oaktree@planning.lacounty.gov](mailto:oaktree@planning.lacounty.gov).

## What is the Protected Zone?

The area within the dripline plus five feet, or the area 15' from the surface of the trunk, whichever distance is greater, including a combination of the two. See Figures below.

FIG. 1: PROTECTED ZONE (PLAN VIEW)

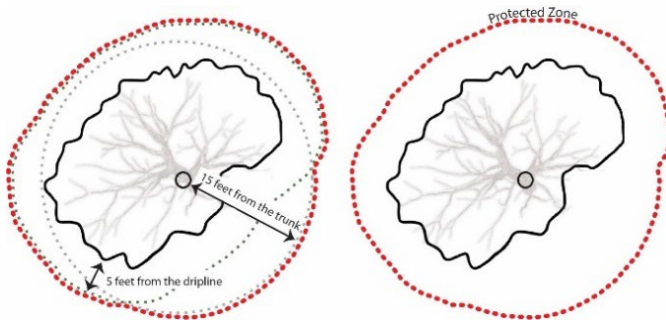
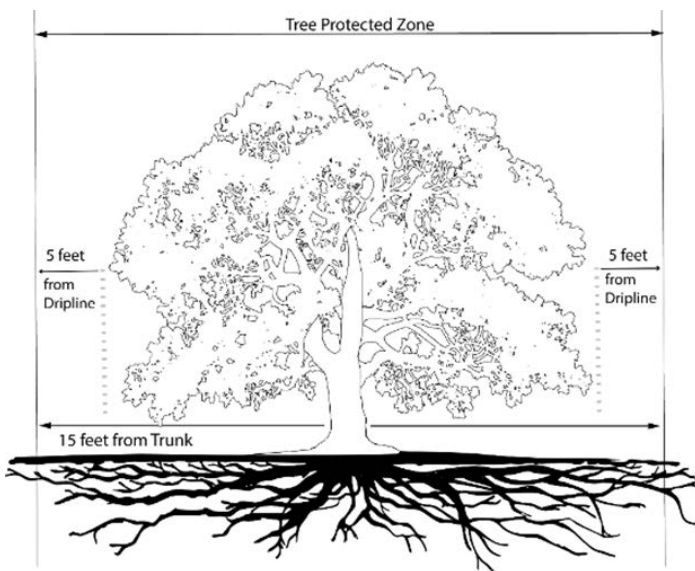


FIG. 2: PROTECTED ZONE (ELEVATION VIEW)



## What Counts as an “Impact”?

Pruning branches and roots over 2” in diameter, trenching or compacting soil in the protected zone, and removing a protected oak tree are considered impacts. Driving and storing heavy materials within the protected zone can compact the soil, suffocating roots.

## What about Heritage Oak Trees?

Heritage oak trees have a trunk measuring 36” or more, at 4.5’ from the mean natural grade (DBH). All impacts to heritage oak trees require an Oak Tree Permit with a public hearing.

## What Does the Oak Tree Permitting Process Entail?

Depending on the degree of impact to protected oak trees from the proposed project, the oak tree permitting process may include an oak tree report, fees, site visits from LA County Planning and Forestry, planting replacement trees, payment into an oak conservation fund, and a public hearing.

## Can I Get Help When Planning a Project on a Property with Oak Trees?

LA County Planning offers pre-application counseling to help locate and redesign projects to avoid or minimize impacts to oak trees.

**No oak tree impact = no Oak Tree Permit!**

For help with permitting under the existing Oak Tree Ordinance, contact LA County Planning's Current Planning Division: **(213) 974-6411** or [info@planning.lacounty.gov](mailto:info@planning.lacounty.gov).

## Info about the Value & Importance of Oaks

LA County Planning offers an informational pamphlet about the value and importance of oak trees, available on the Oak Tree Program website (under Documents): [bit.ly/oaktreeprogram](http://bit.ly/oaktreeprogram)

Take the Survey!  
Stay in touch!

[bit.ly/oaktree-newsletter](http://bit.ly/oaktree-newsletter)  
[oaktree@planning.lacounty.gov](mailto:oaktree@planning.lacounty.gov)

