

Oak Tree Permit Update

Comments & Questions

Date	Commentor Name	Meeting #	Comment or Question	Response
8/19/2025	Alicia Gonzalez	Meeting #2	Could you please clarify what the criteria was for changing from 200 ft to 50 ft for the area where oaks had to be protected during construction?	<p>The Protected Zone is the area extending from the trunk to a distance of five feet past the dripline, or the area extending 15 feet from the trunk of a protected oak tree, whichever distance is greater at any point furthest away from the trunk of the tree. The 200 ft to 50 ft is not the protected area.</p> <p>The existing Oak Tree Permit application requires <u>a site plan</u> to show any oak trees within 200 ft of the proposed project. Planning staff observed property owners in oak woodlands preparing extensive site plans, and oak tree reports mapping and documenting data from many oak trees which were ultimately not impacted by the proposed project. In light of the new data we are requesting in the oak tree report and to mitigate this cost burden on applicants, planning staff suggested requiring the location and size of all oak trees <u>within 50 ft of proposed construction</u>, instead of 200 ft.</p>
8/19/2025	Alicia Gonzalez	Meeting #2	<p>These are wonderful changes for development going through the proper permit channels, but not everybody applies for coastal development permits. For new-builds, yes, but for remodels and all kinds of things, that should have a Coastal Development Permit, they don't.</p> <p>So how do we go about the enforcement of unpermitted, non-permitted development that is impacting oak trees in the Santa Monica Mountains?</p>	<p>Enforcement in LA County is complaint-based. To learn more about Zoning Enforcement, visit this site: https://planning.lacounty.gov/enforcement/</p> <p>Please contact Zoning Enforcement to report a violation: Email zoningenforcement@planning.lacounty.gov or call (213) 974-6453</p>
8/19/2025	Alicia Gonzalez	Meeting #2	Disseminate this information to landscapers who are not arborists and to Fire personnel. Some Fire personnel said, "Be careful with the oak canopy that catches on fire!"	Thank you for your comment.

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8/19/2025	Melanie Traxler	Meeting #2	At the last workshop, there was a slide with the number of permits that had been pulled over the last decade, or maybe longer. Did that count include Emergency Permits?	Yes, the data included Emergency Oak Tree Permits.
8/19/2025	Melanie Traxler	Meeting #2	Surprise at how low the numbers were, given the length of time.... Based on those numbers, you had 3900 encroachments, which presumably ... is about 130 or 100 permits per year, and I'm pretty sure there's a lot more construction that happens that isn't being reported, or it's not getting counted here. Do you have a sense, is it because permits aren't happening, or is it because [of some other reason]? Why are the numbers so low?	These are the data we have.
8/19/2025	Stephanie Landregan	Meeting #2	Talking about the protected zone of the canopy.. Are we talking about requiring specifications on plans that detail this? Because, oftentimes when we're doing development, we will see, the fact that there are some oak trees, some of them are going to try to be mitigated. But I think the protected zone can be part of the specifications that are part of any plans that are submitted. Now, there are, of course, those instances where there are no plans submitted as part of a development.	Yes, the existing Oak Tree Permit requires the protected zone to be shown on the site plan. An Oak Tree Permit application requires both a site plan and an oak tree report. Can you please elaborate on circumstances when "no plan [is] submitted as part of a development"?
8/19/2025	Stephanie Landregan	Meeting #2	In your specifications, do you specifically call out no vehicles to be parked under the canopies of oaks? It is a huge problem on most construction sites.	Yes, we are proposing to add a prohibition on vehicle and equipment parking in the tree Protected Zone.
8/19/2025	Stephanie Landregan	Meeting #2	You said "no net loss" [is a goal in the LA County General Plan]. Is that of trees or of canopy cover because it is a huge difference. I think it should be canopy.	The General Plan does not specify. The exact language is: "Policy 4.1: Preserve and restore oak woodlands and other native woodlands that are conserved in perpetuity with the goal of no net loss of existing woodlands." Internally, we are interpreting this as canopy . The Conservation and Natural Resources Element will be updated within the next two years and may be an opportunity to clarify this policy goal.

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8/19/2025	Stephanie Landregan	Meeting #2	Zone Zero meeting on Tuesdays at noon. Contact for the invite: "Stephanie Landregan" <landregan@att.net>	Thank you for the information.
8/19/2025	Leslie Lowes	Meeting #2	<p>As a homeowner of existing trees, there is a conflict to maintain the tree health . It's important to keep tree canopy over the roof because we believe it helped... And the important thing, I think, you know, as Stephanie was alluding to, it's important to keep tree canopy over, the roof, because we believe it protected our home from burning in Altadena, and, ... Yet, we're required to keep some certain amount of spacing between the roof, 5 feet, and the canopy, which is fine, but sometimes the branches that are over the roof grow beyond the 2 inch size, and then we're kind of stuck.</p> <p>There's a conflict between maintaining that space.</p> <p>Did I hear that the diameter branch limit would not trigger a permit? The main thing is that less than 25% over 2 years of the canopy be removed, and that's the determining factor.</p>	<p>In the update to the Oak Tree Permit, any pruning Zone 0 requirements would be exempt to comply with the Fire Code.</p> <p>The proposal for pruning would set a new maximum of the percentage of tree canopy that can be removed (25 percent over 2 years) <u>and</u> also keep the 2 inch diameter threshold.</p> <p>(Branches less than 2 inches in diameter are exempt, but branches greater than 2 inches require an oak tree permit).</p>
8/19/2025	Victoria Workman	Meeting #2	Can the oak trees that were planted over 20 years ago qualify to become "Landscape Oaks" and become exempt from the Oak Tree Permit?	<p>In our existing Oak Tree Permit ordinance, all oak species, regardless of nativity, that have a trunk diameter of 8" diameter at breast height (DBH) or greater are protected.</p> <p>In the update, we are proposing to exempt voluntarily and newly planted oak trees, "Landscape Oaks", from any oak tree regulations - provided the trees are registered and documented at the time of their planting with the Planning department. Once these "Landscape Oaks" are registered and documented by the Planning department, they will be tracked on a public-facing map.</p> <p>If the proposal to exempt "Landscape Oaks" remains in the OTP update draft, the exemption would apply only to oak trees planted after the effective date. We anticipate will be in Spring 2026.</p> <p>The oak trees that have already been planted 20 years ago will not qualify for such an exemption because they are not "newly planted".</p>

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8/19/2025	Charles Miller	Meeting #2 chat	<p>Replying to "Oak trees native to LA County: https://bit.ly/tree...":</p> <p>Calscape (CNPS) has a larger list of 25 oaks local to LA County. LA CFAC concurs with the larger list.</p>	The Oak Tree Ordinance protects all oak species in Los Angeles County. The LA County Tree Hub features a subset of seventeen oak species that have been field-verified by LA County by Planning staff biologists and a local expert of oak species in the southern Californian floristic province.
8/19/2025	Mario Garcia	Meeting #2 chat	Landscape Oak Trees 📌	Thank you for your comment.
8/19/2025	Stephanie Landregan	Meeting #2 chat	How long or often would a certified arborist need to be on the construction site. Construction could take weeks or months.	Planning is proposing to require the project arborist to be present at the construction site when oak tree impacts occur and to provide photo documentation of activity within the protected zone of the oak tree.
8/19/2025	Stephanie Landregan	Meeting #2 chat	Would establishing a tree protection zone following ANSI 300 standards with the rules and the arborists contact info with maybe weekly or biweekly site visits by the arborist suffice?	Planning is proposing to require ANSI 300 pruning standards. Planning is not proposing to change the definition of the tree protected zone. Planning is proposing to require the arborist be on site when oak tree impacts occur. Regular weekly or biweekly site visits are not required.
8/19/2025	Erin Roberts	Meeting #2 chat	What is a stewardship oak?	"Stewardship Oaks" are native oak tree seedlings and saplings already growing on the project site that are below the size threshold for protection that are tagged, registered and documented with the Department to be designated Stewardship oak trees, a subcategory of Replacement oak trees, and are therefore protected under the provisions of this Chapter.
8/19/2025	Leslie Lowes	Meeting #2 chat	What if a tree branch over your roof has grown > 2" since last trim, but is within 5' of roof. Will the new ordinance allow the branch to be cut as long as < 25% of foliage is removed within 2 years?	The Oak Tree Ordinance update will exempt any modifications required to meet adopted Fire Protection regulations.
8/19/2025	Pat Ruiz	Meeting #2 chat	Is the tree canopy submitted on permit plans verified if it matches the actual tree out on site?	Yes. The LA County Planner will check the shape of the canopy on the site plan with an aerial image from GIS-NET of the project site. In addition, LA County Forestry will make a site visit to verify the oak tree report, including the location of the tree, its health condition, and the size and shape of the canopy.

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8/19/2025	Pat Ruiz	Meeting #2 chat	If these changes are approved, will they apply only to future permits and not current or ongoing permits?	Changes will apply to future permits. The updated ordinance will become effective 30 days after adoption by the Board of Supervisors.
8/19/2025	Leslie Lowes	Meeting #2 chat	I think tree trimmers should bear responsibility if they cut more than allowed, not the home owner.	The applicant who obtains the permit is the responsible party.
8/19/2025	Khai Chung	Meeting #2 chat	Can a Landscape Architect be considered writing the oak tree report?	No, we are not proposing Landscape Architects write oak tree reports.
8/19/2025	Charles Miller	Meeting #2 chat	There's a good chance Victoria's oaks would be non-native Holm oaks that would not be protected.	The existing ordinance protects all oaks, regardless of nativity.
8/19/2025	Leslie Lowes	Meeting #2 chat	I also wrote in a suggestion that the county set up a self-certification opportunity for arborists and tree trimmers.	Will follow up to ask for more detail.
8/19/2025	Khai Chung	Meeting #2 chat	Oak trees in the street right of way often require trimming for height clearance and safety. Will an oak tree permit be required?	No, an Oak Tree Permit is not required. Oak trees in the right-of-way are under the purview of Public Works. Please contact Public Works for more information about oak trees in the right-of-way in unincorporated LA County: https://pw.lacounty.gov/core-service-areas/environmental-services/parkway-trees/
8/19/2025	Daniel S	Meeting #2 chat	Will permitting be required for trenchless boring through the TPZ of a regulated oak trees, if bored at sufficient depth and with exit/entry holes outside the TPZ?	Yes, an Oak Tree Permit is required because it will encroach into the Tree Protected Zone of a protected Oak Tree.

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8/19/2025	Drew Ready	Meeting #2 chat	As a certified arborist I can share that hedging oak trees is not a best practice and is generally discouraged. This type of pruning focuses growth on the branch tips, reduces air flow and sunlight, degrades habitat benefits and can increase pests and disease.	Thank you for your comment.
8/19/2025	Erin Roberts	Meeting #2 chat	Is the County anticipating an update to the oak woodland management plan?	Not at this time.
8/19/2025	Drew Ready	Meeting #2 chat	25 percent removal 4x in eight years could result in tree mortality, maybe 25 percent every 10 years?	Will follow up to ask for more detail.
8/19/2025	Stephanie Landregan	Meeting #2 chat	For the Defensible Space Zone Zero Tuesday advocacy group please email me at landregan@att.net	Thank you for your comment.
8/21/2025	Lori Paul	Alt Meeting #2	<p>For those of us who are out in the community and see things happening in the evenings, over holidays, on weekends, even at night, for goodness sakes, in the past, there needs to be a fallback emergency contact that isn't just, you know, planning or calling Public Works and the County because we have seen oaks illegally go down and we can't call in violations then. It's not a 911 issue, but on the other hand, it is because large oaks are coming down. Try calling the sheriffs to come out to save an oak, and they will laugh at you.</p> <p>So, please work some sort of emergency reporting mechanism in for violations in progress. Just the way you call right in if a home's being robbed. You don't want to wait two days until the next Monday to call in, you know, a burglar report.</p> <p>There is no place to report emergency destruction of oaks.</p>	Thank you for your comment. We do not presently have staff available to address emergency destruction of oak trees.

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8/21/2025	Lori Paul	Alt Meeting #2	<p>There's a horrific loss of oaks going on right now up in Millard Canyon here. Those of us who reside in the Cheney Trail neighborhood and so forth have gotten notifications. Cabin owners, a couple of them who are still present after the fire, are pretty frantic....They are taking out healthy oaks so that there's "helicopter access"...</p> <p>They are taking out retaining walls.. and where oaks are helping hold up the hillside, when the oaks come down, there's going to be tremendous erosion damage...</p> <p>There is just no one up there supervising this area of the county where we have these oak trees, and when these oak trees are taken out and debris falls into the canyon, and so much damage is done. When we do get rain, and it comes hard and heavy like it did earlier this year after the fire, we're going to have real problems for trees and property owners downslope....</p> <p>So, this is a very serious situation going on, and yet no one's paying attention. So, particularly because it's oak trees being destroyed. ...</p> <p>I wanted to bring that to your attention at this meeting, and hopefully we can get some sort of inquiry into this, because no one's paying attention to these contractors, and those of us who have had debris clearance on our properties can tell you things are not always done properly on site.</p>	Please contact Zoning Enforcement to report a violation: Email zoningenforcement@planning.lacounty.gov or call (213) 974-6453
8/21/2025	Rachel Burnap	Alt Meeting #2	<p>With some of the proposed changes - from care professional to requiring a ISA-certified arborist or a registered consulting arborist - that's really great that is really still going to depend on that person to see if that tree is infested or not with Goldspotted Oak Borer (GSOB).</p> <p>And with so many people looking at oak trees through this permitting process, why hasn't more GSOB been found yet? This really is going to depend on that person seeing if the tree is infested or not with GSOB. And with so many people looking at oak trees through this permitting process, why hasn't more GSOB been found yet?</p> <p>That we need to make sure that those arborists know what GSOB is when they're looking at a tree!</p>	Thank you for your comment.

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8/21/2025	Robert Steller	Alt Meeting #2	<p>Okay, so I'm a homeowner, or was a homeowner in Altadena, and we're working on trying to define the footprint that we can put our house in, because we had several rather large oaks, which were over our house when it burned. I've already contacted the forestry department and gotten permits, and had our arborists come in and clear out the damaged, the burned branches and so on. So we've kind of... we've pushed the drip line back a bit because of that removal. So my question is, as we're getting ready to do an application to LA County Planning Department, when we do our part plan, I need to have an outline of the drip line and the 5-foot setback from that, on our pot plan. Any suggestions on how we obtain that outline of the drip line? Do I need to get somebody in to fly a drone to get that? What's the typical procedure for that?</p>	<p>Typically, property owners hire an arborist to help them with the mapping of the footprint of the structure and dripline of the canopy of the tree.</p>
8/21/2025	Lori Paul	Alt Meeting #2 chat	<p>Does it concern anyone else that there are so few participants in these important update meetings compared with the vast number of persons and groups concerned about oaks and trees in general? 7 persons or perhaps less?? Excuse me, it appears to be only 10 attendees?</p>	<p>You are attending Alternative Meeting #2 to accommodate Altadena residents and other residents who had scheduling conflicts on Tuesday nights. You can help encourage Altadena residents to attend by sharing the OTP update outreach flyer.</p>
8/21/2025	Lori Paul	Alt Meeting #2 chat	<p>Instead of exempting oaks as so-called "landscape oaks" with less protection... why not give Oaks actual monetary value in terms of some program of carbon credit? In fact other trees should be included in a County woodland carbon credit program that encompasses the "urban forest" comprised of both street trees and privately owned trees.</p> <p>This value could provide actual income for the County that could then convey some portion of that actual benefit to property owners?</p>	<p>The scope of this project is to improve the Oak Tree Permit which has the purpose to preserve and maintain healthy oak trees in the development process on private property. The described carbon credit program concerns woodlands and the urban forest which is outside the scope of this update.</p> <p>Please contact the Chief Sustainability Office for more information about the LA County Community Forest Management Plan: https://cso.lacounty.gov/the-plan/cso-current-initiatives/community-forest-management-plan/</p>
8/21/2025	Serena Burnett	Alt Meeting #2 chat	<p>How does one find the ordinances/regs. relating to oak trees in incorporated areas of LA County?</p>	<p>To find oak tree regulations in other incorporated cities, visit the website of each local government and search for "protected tree" or "oak" to find their regulations.</p>

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8/21/2025	Rachel Burnap	Alt Meeting #2 chat	One question under application- why the switch of 200 to 50 ft of distance of tree to proposed construction?	<p>The existing Oak Tree Permit application requires a site plan showing any oak trees within 200 ft of the proposed project.</p> <p>Planning staff observed property owners in oak woodlands preparing extensive site plans, and oak tree reports mapping and documenting data from many oak trees which were ultimately not impacted by the proposed project. In light of the new data we are requesting in the oak tree report and to mitigate this cost burden on applicants, planning staff suggested requiring the location and size of all oak trees within 50 ft of proposed construction, instead of 200 ft.</p>
8/21/2025	Joe Monaly	Alt Meeting #2 chat	I missed the first meeting because of work, is that session available?	<p>Yes, all meetings are recorded and available on our website: https://planning.lacounty.gov/long-range-planning/oak-tree-program/meetings-and-headings/</p>
8/21/2025	Serena Burnett	Alt Meeting #2 chat	Do the tree ordinances pertain to oaks in backyards and how does the county monitor what trees people are cutting down in their backyards?	<p>Yes, the Oak Tree Permit applies to all oak trees on private property in unincorporated LA County that are 8" DBH and greater in backyards.</p> <p>Enforcement of LA County's code is complaint-based. If a violation is reported to Zoning Enforcement, Zoning Enforcement will investigate</p>
8/21/2025	Joe Monaly	Alt Meeting #2 chat	When you are looking at geo tag locations, is Google Maps ok or do you need a surveyor to provide that information?	<p>Yes, using Google Maps to obtain geocoordinates is fine. Planners will check by looking at aerial maps. No need to hire a surveyor.</p>
8/21/2025	Joe Monaly	Alt Meeting #2	We already provide that information to Forestry. How do we provide that information to you?	<p>Planning is still fleshing out the procedure, but generally, we are asking for a .csv file with a tree inventory with geocoordinates and other tree data.</p>

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8/21/2025	Joe Monaly	Alt Meeting #2	<p>We've been working with the fire department for years because Kegel Canyon got burned out pretty good, and every couple of years, we have another tree or two that will die off. As a result of the fire, I mean, we're doing everything we can to try to nurse them along, and we're also grateful if you're going to extend the length of time that a permit applies to a tree beyond the 90 days, that would be greatly appreciated, because we are doing our best to try to keep them alive. Trimming dead material off... Cutting them down is not our go-to, but I have a feeling we're kind of unique in that regard.</p>	<p>Thank you for your comment.</p> <p>If an Emergency Oak Tree Permit (EOTP) expires after 90 days, a resident can apply for a new no-cost EOTP from the Forestry Division.</p>
8/21/2025	Joe Monaly	Alt Meeting #2	<p>The Forestry Division had mentioned at the last walkthrough that they were considering using Kegel Canyon as a kind of lab, to see how trees can recover after fire, and I was wondering if you had, any comments or information on that? Because it actually makes a lot of sense.</p> <p>The Kegel Canyon fire happened, what, something like 8 years ago, and the lessons learned on that one could also be applied to what has happened in Altadena.</p> <p>And we were wondering if you had any thoughts about that, or had that made it onto your radar.</p>	<p>Will follow up to ask for more detail.</p>
8/25/2025	Charles Miller	Defensible Space Working Group	<p>[Exempting "Landscape Oaks" from Regulations]</p> <p>Our organization maintains that this is a terrible idea. As the urban environment ages, more and more of the native trees will be human-planted. We've never seen any data that comes close to suggesting that the number of native trees not planted due to fear of them being protected comes close to the damage of not protecting human-planted native trees which are in critical need of protection.</p> <p>The way to address Lisa's concerns, we maintain, is not to remove protections for human-planted native trees, but instead to create incentives for planting them over non-native species that provide less support for biodiversity.</p>	<p>Thank you for your comment.</p> <p>"Landscape Oaks" will only be exempted from regulations if residents register and document them with Planning,</p> <p>Residents are still free to plant oak trees <i>without registering</i> them as "Landscape Oaks" with Planning. Such human-planted oak trees will become protected oak trees.</p> <p>The incentive is "Landscape oaks" are permit-free. Another possible incentive would be to provide a County Landscape Oaks map with counts of the number of Landscape oaks are planted by community so residents can see where investments in the local ecology is occurring.</p>

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8/25/2025	Lisa Fimiani	Defensible Space Working Group	<p>the elephant in the State of California Room is our Draconian rules about MAINTAINING our Oaks, the state handcuffs owners/developers so no one wants to use them in huge development plans! How do we change THAT?!</p> <p>The other half to this coin is the aversion of planting oaks because you can't do anything with the land afterwards - the oaks, by their very presence, prevents their removal for future development plans. I personally am all for this but it may prevent the use of Oaks in proposed plant palettes.</p> <p>Yes, MORE incentives - if ever we have a reason, now, with these fires - YES, YES, YES TO MORE OAKS!!!!</p>	<p>In the Oak Tree Permit update, LA County is proposing to address aversion to planting oak trees by exempting voluntarily-planted, newly planted oak trees from regulations. These "Landscape Oaks" will have to be registered and documented by the Planning department and will be tracked on a public-facing map.</p>
8/26/2025	Jacki Ayer	Email	Does this oak tree ordinance address any plant species other than oaks? or does it pertain solely to oak trees only?	<p>Oaks only. The Oak Tree Permit pertains to all oak trees, regardless of nativity: https://trees-lacounty.hub.arcgis.com/pages/oak-trees</p>
8/26/2025	Lisa Fimiani	Email	<p>My experience in the past 38 years is that oaks are treated like pariahs by developers, and I can see why. Once planted they handcuff owners into complying with strict management requirements that are inconsistently explained and enforced by cities, leaving the property owner perplexed and confused about what to do. Net result: Oaks are rarely (if ever) used in urban planting. It breaks my heart.</p>	<p>We have heard this sentiment repeated over the years. It is an unintended consequence of protecting a valued resource.</p> <p>We are attempting to address this issue by proposing to exempt oak trees newly and voluntarily planted by residents and developers who then register the trees with LA County to be "landscape oak trees" so we have a record that these trees are to be exempted from regulations even after they reach the size when they would normally be regulated.</p> <p>We hope this will remove any second thoughts residents and developers have of planting oak trees.</p>