

**From:** [Tom DuBois](#)  
**To:** [Council, City](#); [Greg Tanaka](#); [Ed Lauing](#); [Vicki Veenker](#); [Lythcott-Haims, Julie](#); [Lydia Kou](#); [Greer Stone](#); [Pat Burt](#)  
**Cc:** [Clerk, City](#)  
**Subject:** Comments on Item #41 Tree Protection Ordinance Year One Implementation Update  
**Date:** Sunday, June 18, 2023 4:23:41 PM  
**Attachments:** [Staff Report 14355 Tree Protection.pdf](#)

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Council Members,

My understanding is that Monday night is an informational study session on the Tree Protection ordinance update in 2021, and that policy changes will be agendized after review by boards and commissions in the Fall. I've attached the Staff report from June 6, 2022. Please take time to read the background on page 3 as well as what was actually changed (summary of changes on page 5, redlines on page 20).

There seems to be some misunderstanding of what the tree protection ordinance "is" and "is not". I want to provide my perspective. First adopted in 1951, the ordinance hadn't been updated since 2011. After many public meetings including community outreach meetings, ARB, Parks and Rec and Council meetings, we passed a thoughtful update last year.

During last year's review process, I looked at the protection ordinances of surrounding cities. With the Palo Alto update we moved from lagging behind other cities in tree protection to middle of the pack. Our ordinance protects trees over 15 inches in diameter. This is NOT extreme in any way! 15 inches aligns us with Los Altos, Menlo Park, and Mountain View. East Palo Alto protects trees starting at 8 inches in diameter. Redwood City and Sunnyvale protect them at 12 inches in diameter.

The vast majority of our trees are on private land and, as with other private infrastructure, it must be maintained by the owners including watering and pruning when necessary. Again this is true in all cities as far as I know. Our Urban Forester is making good progress helping ensure residents know what to do. Satellite-based tree management solutions that the city uses now help us manage our urban forest and be much more proactive than we were able to be in the past.

The negative press came out because of the storms. Yes we had very severe weather this year with 80 mile per hour winds that blew down branches and trees. It was shocking, dangerous and sad to see. The storm didn't impact just Palo Alto - talking to our Urban Forester and Canopy, other cities had similar impacts and worse. However, we need to keep severe weather in perspective and not point to this rare event as justification to weaken a very reasonable ordinance.

In terms of the ordinance's implementation, you see in the staff report data, the impact has

been minimal. The old and new tree ordinance resulted in similar outcomes on a percentage basis.

One final point. We need to protect smaller diameter trees now because Palo Alto has a more mature urban canopy relative to some of our neighboring cities. We MUST protect smaller diameter trees in order to have younger trees replace the older ones. Without that, we risk losing both our older, larger trees and the smaller ones growing now that would replace them.

I think that I shall never see  
A poem lovely as a tree.

Regards,

Tom DuBois

**From:** [Kammy Lo](#)  
**To:** [Council, City](#)  
**Cc:** [Shikada, Ed](#); [Gollinger, Peter](#)  
**Subject:** Canopy's Comments on 6/19/23 City Council Agenda Item #41: Tree Protection Ordinance Year One Implementation Update  
**Date:** Friday, June 16, 2023 7:00:21 AM

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## **Item 41 - Tree Protection Ordinance Year One Implementation Update City Council June 19, 2023 Meeting**

Dear Mayor Kou, Vice Mayor Stone, and Council Members,

We are writing to reiterate our support for Palo Alto's updated Tree Protection Ordinance and to express our deep gratitude to city staff for their dedicated work on implementation. Less than a year ago the City Council took a vital step forward in growing and preserving the city's urban forest. The ordinance update aligned the City's ordinance with what neighboring cities have already implemented and added clear criteria to guide decision making. We look forward to continuing to partner with the City as implementation of the updated ordinance continues.

Last winter's unprecedented storms underscore the importance of the City's commitment to its urban forest. Beloved trees fell or were damaged, and our community experienced fear, loss, and property damage due to the torrential storms. Yet trees remain the most important nature-based solution to climate change. Despite the loss, our valued urban forest remains in place, sequestering carbon, combating the urban heat island effect, and cooling buildings. One of the key points in Canopy's [message of support for our community during the storms](#) was proactive tree care. Appropriate watering and proper pruning will help trees withstand storms to come.

We are grateful for the opportunity to partner with the City's excellent staff, in particular the Urban Forestry Section led by Peter Gollinger, on outreach for the updated ordinance. Canopy's TreEnews newsletters have reached thousands of community members; Canopy's and the City's webpages have answered many questions; and the ordinance update has been incorporated into Canopy's popular tree walk brochure for Palo Alto. Over the coming months, additional components of the City's thorough outreach plan will be rolled out.

As the City works toward its Sustainability and Climate Action Plan goal of increasing city-wide tree canopy coverage to 40% by 2030, the updated Tree Protection Ordinance plays a

key role. We appreciate your commitment to growing and preserving Palo Alto's urban forest.

Best regards,

Kammy Lo (she/her/她)  
Interim Executive Director

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