



City of Santa Barbara
Parks and Recreation Department

Memorandum

DATE: March 25, 2009
TO: Park and Recreation Commission
FROM: Tim Downey, Urban Forest Superintendent
SUBJECT: Tree Preservation Policies and Enforcement Procedures

RECOMMENDATION: That the Commission:

- A. Review the proposed changes to Title 15 of the Municipal Code regarding the Preservation of Trees; and
- B. Concur with the Street Tree Advisory Committee's (STAC) recommendations regarding the use of American National Standard Institute (ANSI) A300 Pruning Standards and Best Management Practices (BMPs) in the City's regulation of trees.

Introduction

The purpose of this staff report is to update the Commission on the progress of developing tree preservation policy recommendations to the Ordinance Committee of the City Council and to recommend that the Commission concur with the STAC recommendations regarding the use of American National Standard Institute (ANSI) A300 Pruning Standards and BMPs in the City's regulation of trees.

City staff presented the Tree Preservation and Landscape Plan Maintenance Policy recommendations to the City Council on December 9, 2008. The Council Agenda Report with those recommendations is included as Attachment 1 to this staff report. At that time, the City Council took action to refer the recommendations to the Ordinance Committee, and requested STAC and Park and Recreation Commission recommendations regarding the use of the ANSI A300 Pruning Standards and BMPs. Some members of the public, including some STAC members, had recommended that the City adopt the ANSI A300 Pruning Standards and BMPs as the means of establishing tree violations under the Municipal Code.

ANSI A300 Pruning Standards and BMPs

ANSI publishes safety standards for use in all maintenance industries. The ANSI A300 Pruning Standards for tree care operations are intended for use as guidelines for federal, state, municipal, and private authorities including property owners, property managers, and utilities in drafting maintenance specifications. The ANSI A300 Pruning Standards includes definitions of pruning techniques as well as pruning tools, tree structure, and tree professional categories. The Forestry Program currently uses these standards when contract specifications are prepared for tree pruning work, or as mitigation measures when appropriate for tree trimming violations. Forestry staff also uses these standards as a guideline for City tree pruning practices.

The BMPs document is published to help interpret and implement the ANSI A300 Pruning Standards. The BMPs document defines several types of pruning techniques and describes where to make cuts related to the anatomical structure of the tree. The purpose of the BMPs document is to establish a common description of preferred pruning styles and methods.

The ANSI A300 Pruning Standards and BMPs documents are included as Attachment 2 to this report. Please note that the revised 2008 documents are attached to this staff report. The STAC received a prior edition. There are no substantive changes between the two versions.

Santa Barbara Municipal Code

Chapter 15.20, Tree Planting and Maintenance, regulates the management and removal of trees located in City rights-of-way and public spaces. Chapter 15.24, Preservation of Trees, regulates the management and removal of trees on private property located in the front setback or, where required, in parking lots.

Section 15.24.020 of Chapter 15.24 prohibits the cutting down or otherwise destroying a tree without a permit. As the Municipal Code is currently written, the term “cut down or otherwise destroy” is defined as cutting a tree down or pruning a tree in such a way that its natural character is significantly altered or its overall size is reduced by more than one-third ($\frac{1}{3}$).

The requirements and prohibitions established under Section 15.24.020 and Section 15.20.110 (permits required for planting, maintaining, or removing a Street Tree) of the Municipal Code allows the City to enforce violations.

STAC Discussion and Public Comment

At its regular meeting on March 5, 2009, the STAC reviewed and discussed the ANSI A300 Pruning Standards and BMPs as potential tools for the enforcement of the City's regulations related to private trees. Included as Attachment 3, the staff report for the STAC meeting outlines the key issues for discussion.

The STAC discussion focused on whether to incorporate a more stringent pruning standard related to the amount of allowed reduction and whether it should be a percentage of foliage or reduction in size. The Municipal Code currently provides for an overall size reduction of one-third ($\frac{1}{3}$), whereas the ANSI standard recommends no more than one-quarter ($\frac{1}{4}$) of foliage. The benefits to the urban forest, challenges of determining a violation, and using the standard for enforcement were key considerations in the discussion. There was also discussion regarding how these documents could be referenced in Title 15. The Committee wanted these documents could to be used as intended and referenced in two areas.

Public comment at the meeting ranged from support for incorporating the ANSI A300 Pruning Standards and BMPs document in their entirety, to support for eliminating the regulation of privately owned trees altogether.

STAC Recommendations

In addition to concurring with other proposed changes to Title 15, the STAC made the following specific recommendations:

1. Amend Municipal Code 15.24.010 to allow an overall size reduction of up to $\frac{1}{4}$ in a 12-month period.
2. Amend Chapter 15.20 to require that work by permit on City-owned trees is in conformance with the ANSI A300 Pruning Standards and BMPs.
3. Reference ANSI A300 Pruning Standards and BMPs in Chapter 15.24 for use by the public for maintenance of private setback trees.

Attachment 4 includes the proposed changes to Title 15 of the Municipal Code including the STAC recommendations.

Formalize the role of the STAC

The STAC was first established by the Park and Recreation Commission on December 20, 1979. The membership and terms were modified on December 16, 1998. The STAC had three voting members that served two-year terms. The membership was

modified again on September 22, 1999 to add two alternate voting positions to the Committee. The purpose of the two alternate voting members is to ensure that there is always a quorum. By including STAC in the Municipal Code, the purpose and role of the Committee will be formally recognized.

Staff Recommendation

Staff believes that the proposed changes to the Municipal Code, including the STAC recommendations, will improve the City's ability to enforce tree preservation regulations and sustain the urban forest. Staff recommends that the Commission concur with the STAC recommendations and forward the proposed changes to the Ordinance Committee.

- ATTACHMENTS:**
1. December 9, 2008, Council Agenda Report, Subject: Tree Preservation and Landscape Plan Maintenance Policies and Enforcement Procedures Recommendations
 2. 2008 ANSI A300 Pruning Standards and BMPs
 3. March 5, 2009, STAC Staff Report, Subject: Tree Preservation Policies and Enforcement Procedures
 4. Preliminary Ordinance Revisions - Draft

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