

San Mateo County Tree Ordinances Update Project

A Collaboration of the Planning and Building, Parks, and Public Works Departments and the Office of Sustainability

Facilitated by the Peninsula Conflict Resolution Center

November 17th, 2016

Redwood City Public Library

9:30 – 12:00

Participant's Agenda

Meeting Objectives:

1. Discuss whether zoning districts, ecological or other conditions can be used to differentiate tree policies; discuss whether unique rules are needed for specific areas
2. Evaluate policies requiring tree retention on sites proposed for development, including redesign requirements and other potential constraints; discuss policy options
3. Consider revising the tree ordinances to increase protection of Oaks and other natives and endemics; discuss policy options
4. Evaluate policies for tree trimming; consider policy options for expanding protections; PG&E Presentation

9:30	Welcome and Greeting
9:40	Group and Facilitator Introductions, Agenda Review AddieRose Mayer, Facilitator, Peninsula Conflict Resolution Center
9:55	Objective #1 - Policies based on geography- Joe LaClair Clarifying questions: 1. Is only DR being looked at? Staff – No, but DR districts have more policies controlling tree preservation. Staff relies in part on General Plan policies in other areas when requiring preservation. Significant and Heritage tree policies lack clear guidance on protecting trees; they require a permit in order to remove a tree and specify the findings for permit approval. The heritage tree ordinance provides more protection than significant, but both contain policies focused on determining whether one can remove a tree rather than explicit policies requiring tree retention. 2. Is there a regulation around where to plant a tree? – Emphasis is about removal of trees and not about planting trees Staff: The County's tree ordinances does not have policies requiring landscaping or guidance for that, except in Coastside DR districts. Mitigation planting for removed trees is required. 3. Is there a consideration to grow or enhance the urban canopy instead of just protection? Staff: No, what approximates it is the general no net loss policy of the General Plan = if you remove a tree you have to replace it. Input: <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Great reports, helpful and very well done2. Allowing a tree to grow is similar to planting a tree.3. Woodside has an ordinance around canopy protection.

10:15

Objective #2 - Policy options for tree retention - Joe LaClair

Clarifying questions:

1. There's no separation between live trees and dead trees?

Staff: Dead trees can be removed anywhere right now; no is permit required for their removal.

2. Is there a standard to define what a dead tree is?

Staff: there's no definition of "dead" right now; it's a gray zone. If there are signs of life, we tend not to consider a tree as dead. We're trying to be flexible when addressing that situation. We're seeing it more with pine trees.

3. Is there value of considering the value of development or redevelopment, e.g., Google and Apple campus 2 (which included tree removal) How do you deal with this if it's not in a DR area?

Staff: County doesn't have large redevelopment sites that are heavily planted with trees, just North Fair Oaks and that is doesn't have large canopy areas.

4. This is all about trees, but there's other vegetation. Is there any thought of expanding to other vegetation?

Staff: it's going to be addressed in another project.

5. Is there a certain range for setback: allowable and feasible?

6. If a homeowner puts down a tree, is there opportunity for mitigation around the zone?

Input:

1. Menlo Park has 4 developments:
 - a. Sharon Heights (removal of up to 100 trees)
 - b. El Camino – every tree is being removed for 3 developments
We should think about managing canopy based on size of project.
2. Include artificial vegetation.
3. If we're thinking about geography, we should consider restricting tree removal where we lack canopy, as well as clarifying which areas have 100% coverage of canopy trees and what is considered 100% coverage.
4. Preventing a geriatric forest – if we know a tree is relatively short lived, why hang on to it? Have some sort of rationale for saving a tree and avoiding geriatric and taking out others that are inappropriate and replacing them with appropriate, long-lived trees.
5. Feedback on policy options:
 - a. 2,3,4,5 – have good suggestions. With policies that require tree maintenance, we usually don't get feedback from developers or others.
 - b. Mitigation aspect should be incorporated as well as incentives, penalties, e.g., fines (this will be discussed in other meeting). It's hard to look at a policy without knowing what will happen if it's not implemented.
 - c. 2 – feels separate and could be added to other considerations.
 - d. Protect and restore (other meeting)
 - e. Hybrid that looks at middle options other than 1 and 7 (2,3,4,5)
 - f. Policy that includes other plants
 - g. More focus on protecting slow growing, long living trees
 - h. Discretion to relax development standards is not consistent with what community values; best option – reduce the house size, people are maxing out - as big as possible. This should be considered in the policies.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Define what is a valuable tree and what is appropriate (key words on policies to have a clear view on how to apply them) j. 3, 4, 5 – Fitting development to resource instead of other way around. Talk about follow up on mitigation plantings. How much time should go by and what should occur to see if it has worked? k. We need to know if they are or not growing (whoever is in charge). We need to have adaptive management so that the species chosen is appropriate; many times in the past they have not been well chosen. <p>Staff: We're not dealing with exotics at this time, but will at a future time</p>
10:40	Objective #3 - Policy options for tree sizing - Joe LaClair
10:50	BREAK

11:00

Discussion and Policy Recommendations on Objective #3

Clarifying questions:

Input on which trees should we protect? (criteria)

1. Infrastructure, private property, proximity, damage should be considered
2. Trees that have a tendency of being deep-rooted, have a better chance to coexist
3. Protect all native species – restore the habitat
4. 4 - Emphasis on native species
5. Include riparian species (willow, cotton wood, historic channel)
6. Increasing protection for other native species
Appreciate county is reviewing policies of other jurisdictions
Does option #4 include 2&3?
Marin County has riparian species that aren't on the list
7. Like having the idea of having different options for significant and heritage trees (like combining them), distinguishing sizes,
Consider the places trees are planted – we see many don't have the appropriate space to grow.
8. 4 – appealing because of simplicity and comprehensive information, among all the differences we may have. Would like to see breaking down sizes for species;
Focus on natives
9. Include trees of different sizes – consideration of trees should not be just for larger trees – include smaller sizes – combine 2,3,4 since it provides more protection for smaller trees for continuing growing canopy
10. Adaptive management for the site
11. Looking at each tree diameter – adaptive management, [ex. a property owner has a number of trees and wants to remove] – have a diameter total [instead of individual tree diameter] and have that as an adaptive management tool, which can be measured easily and can be adapted to the parcel/area and gives flexibility to owner
12. Historic vegetation community should be considered, geography
Hate to lose tulip poplar, and certain other exotics
Agree with adaptive management and being thoughtful on how it's applied
Consider proximity to oaks for some species (diseases)
Marin county has specific policies for specific trees - Hard to make broad policy applying to all trees - Recognize specifics
Specific tree diameter for specific species
13. Significant trees – all you have is diameter (eucalyptus), so combine other considerations
14. Make it easier to remove invasive exotic trees no matter their size (next meeting)

11:20

Objective #4 - Policy options for tree trimming; PG&E presentation – Mike Schaller
Clarifying questions:

1. Would you consider removing trees before they need pruning?

PG&E: Yes, we look for fast, high growing, trees that may impact the wire lines. Call owners and offer service for free.

2. Why are species that aren't going to grow into the lines being removed?

PG&E: Each case is analyzed. Call 800-PGE-5000

3. Is PGE focused primarily on electrical lines or is there a partnership to address other lines?

PG&E: Cable communications and telephone lines don't have the same regulations; when people call, they explain.

Input:

1. Address the cycle – guidelines on pruning cycle

PG&E: minimum of 1 – 3 years

2. Complaints from residents for trees being removed instead of pruned, when they don't provide a threat

PG&E: Each case considers if it's a long term threat and from there the decision is made. They looking at them every year.

Clarifying questions

1. Isn't there a statute already on solar access?

Staff: Yes, separate issue.

2. Would like the visual result of trimming to be considered – aesthetics is important (ANSI standards)

3. Could we use consistent measures (circumference/diameters)?

4. What are the cost implications? We can say what the ideal option is, but if it's going to be thrown away because of cost...

Staff: Be aspirational

5. It's great that the county is doing this, but I feel it's targeting obvious circumstances, but there's way more [around the pruning]...

Staff: People have to check in with Planning Department, to see if they need permit to prune; we don't have specific details on policies yet.

6. If there is permit required, I have a fear that no one would trim their tree.

11:50	<p>Wrap- up: Summary of Next Steps & Meeting Evaluation, AddieRose Mayer and Joe LaClair</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Website for updates: San Mateo County Official Website – Planning Department—Major Projects (http://planning.smcgov.org/tree-ordinances-update-project) - Next meeting: January 26, 2017 Room 405 Office of Sustainability – Conference Room 455 County Center <p>Next steps:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Review map to make sure all areas are included: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Menlo Oaks and Sequoia Tract – Blue b. Scenic corridor c. Define acronyms <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - RM – Resource Management - DR – Design Review - PAD – Planned Agricultural Districts - TPZ – Timber Production Zone 2. Correct presentation: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Significant trees – 12 in ≠ 18 in 3. Google doc or other similar mechanism for providing feedback on policy options for tree retention, trees that we should protect, and trimming: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Think about structure b. How do we define terms? c. What is valued? 4. Send out presentation from PG&E 5. Steering Committee please send out ideas on how information can be conveyed in a way that enables the provision of good feedback 6. Utilize consistent measures (diameter/circumference)
12:00	Close & Thank you