

NEWS

FROM THE OFFICE OF COUNCILMEMBER
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For Immediate Release

Councilmembers Koretz and Bonin Strengthen Los Angeles Tree Protections

Los Angeles — August 19, 2020 — A motion authored by Councilmembers Paul Koretz (CD5) and Mike Bonin (CD11) relative to the City's protected tree ordinance was approved today by the Los Angeles City Council instructing the Urban Forestry Division and the City's Forest Officer, Rachel Malarich, to convene and consult with stakeholder groups to determine methods to preserve overall native tree cover and habitat areas, limit damage to trees during development, and possibly add more trees, based on circumference and species notability, to the protected list.

The motion originated from concerns raised by hillside community members in Bel Air, Laurel Canyon, and Mandeville Canyon about how trees are being too easily removed by developers even before development permit applications are submitted, trees are not being protected during construction activities, and building permits are routinely issued without the Department of Building and Safety being aware of the presence of protected trees on the affected properties. One simple suggested fix was to prioritize trees at the top of the Building and Safety check list, rather than the bottom, where they are an afterthought.

"The effort to strengthen our Protected Tree Ordinance grew out of and was shaped by meetings I had with hillside community members who are more than concerned to see our protected trees falling prey to unscrupulous developers under saw blades and bulldozers, when they are supposed to be protected by City ordinance," said Councilmember Paul Koretz. "The City Council File (# [03-1459-S3](#)) is filled with supportive letters from Neighborhood Councils as diverse as Bel Air-Beverly Crest to Rampart Village to Historic Highland Park, all emphasizing concern for how fast and easily the protected tree ordinance is currently being circumvented. It's insanity. Trees are our first, best defense against the climate catastrophe which is still unfolding before our eyes and are essential habitat for the creatures with whom we share the region."

"Protecting and expanding our urban forest is imperative. Trees fight climate change. Trees beautify our neighborhoods. Trees provide vital shade cover to people when they are outdoors," said Bonin. "As we work to increase the number of trees in Los Angeles, we need to be far more aggressive in protecting existing trees. Today, the City Council directed public works staff to develop a Landmark Trees Program to designate and protect trees identified as Landmark trees, and to work with environmentalists and community groups to strengthen and expand the applicability of our protected tree ordinance — which needs to be much tougher. I am proud to co-sponsor and support these actions and to work with dedicated environmentalists to grow and protect our urban canopy in Los Angeles."

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Some of the ecosystem services provided by trees include: absorbing carbon dioxide (which helps combat climate change), creating canopy shade and, by their roots, water retention, protecting soil health, preventing soil erosion and thereby helping prevent landslides, providing habitat for animals, insects and birds, producing oxygen, improving the livability of neighborhoods, the health of inhabitants, and increasing property values, among many others.

The motion references the City's recent efforts to better protect its wildlife areas, including preserving and enhancing biodiversity (CF#15-0499) and protecting wildlife habitat connectivity (CF #[14-0518](#)). Councilmember Koretz called these efforts complementary: "Every step the City takes can either make things better for the creatures with which we share our environment, or make things worse. I've always been a strong proponent of leaving things in better shape than we found them."

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