

Trees

INFORMATION

Why are trees protected?

The City's Tree Preservation Ordinance (RCMC 17.80) recognizes trees as a valuable natural resource that helps define the community's character; hence, are worthy of preservation. Trees provide scenic beauty, prevent soil erosion, provide shade and maintain temperate climate, provide wind buffer, and act as a filter to remove pollution from air.

What trees are protected?

All "heritage trees" are protected under the City's ordinance, including those on private property. "Heritage trees" means any tree, shrub, or plant that meets at least one of the following criteria:

1. All Eucalyptus windrows; or
2. All woody plants in excess of 30 feet in height and having a single trunk circumference of 20 inches or more, as measured four and a half feet (4.5') from ground level; or
3. Multi-trunk tree(s) having a total circumference of 30 inches or more, as measured 24 inches from ground level; or
4. A strand of trees the nature of which makes each dependent upon the others for survival; or
5. Any other tree as may be deemed historically or culturally significant by the Planning Director because of size, condition, location, or aesthetic qualities.

Exemptions: Fruit or nut bearing trees, trees in public right-of-way where their removal or relocation is necessary to obtain adequate line-of-sight for motorists as required by City Engineer, trees which City Engineer has determined will damage existing public improvements, and trees which require maintenance or removal to protect existing electrical power or communication lines or other utility property.

What about street trees?

Trees within the public right-of-way are City street trees. Sometimes, particularly where sidewalk is curb

adjacent, the street tree may be located behind the sidewalk within a special easement. The Planning or Engineering Department can determine whether a tree behind a sidewalk is a City street tree. For further information about maintenance of street trees, contact the City Yard at (909) 477-2730.

Can I remove a tree?

Removal or relocation of a heritage tree, including those on private property, requires a permit. "Remove" includes any act which will cause a heritage tree to die including, but not limited to, acts which inflict damage upon root systems, bark or other parts of tree by fire, application of toxic substances, operation of equipment or machinery; improper watering; changing natural grade of land by excavation or filling the drip line area around the trunk; or by attachment of signs or artificial material piercing the bark of the tree by means of nails, spikes, or other piercing objects.

Do I need a permit?

Yes, removal of heritage trees requires a permit. Contact the Planning Department at (909) 477-2750 to obtain permits prior to removal. Submittal of complete information, including plot plan and photographs, will expedite your permit processing. The Tree Removal Permit application, available from the Planning Department, lists submittal requirements. For more information about valid reasons for removal and procedures, see reverse side of this handout.



Why can trees be removed?

The City's Tree Preservation Ordinance lists reasons why trees may be considered for removal, such as poor health, weak structure, danger of collapse, damage to improvements, etc. In reviewing a Tree Removal Permit request, staff must also consider the necessity to remove a tree in order to construct improvements, the number of trees in neighborhood, whether the trees are required to be saved by any plan, condition of approval, or designation as an historic landmark. The Ordinance states that removal is the last resort. Redesigning planned home improvements to save trees in place is preferred. If design change is infeasible, then relocation of the tree by transplanting is the preferred alternative to removal. An arborist can advise on the feasibility of relocation.

Tree Care

Each Fall and Winter, rain storms and winds result in more inquiries about removing trees because of fear they will topple. The truth is that "Of the hundreds of thousands of trees growing in Southern California, only a miniscule amount topples," said consulting arborist Robert Hansen. Just as taking care of your body is the best way to insure long-term health, taking proper care of your tree will result in a healthier, longer life. Regular pruning and thinning and care by a qualified arborist can lessen the chance that a tree develops the problems that may cause it to topple.

Can I prune my tree?

Maintenance of heritage trees on private property is the responsibility of the property owner. Heritage trees may be pruned. Improper pruning, such as "topping," can damage or kill trees; therefore, care should be used. The Forest Service has an excellent web site,

complete with illustrations, devoted to how to prune a tree:

http://na.fs.fed.us/spfo/pubs/howtos/ht_prune/htprune-rev-2012-screen.pdf. Copies are also available from the Planning Department.

What if a tree is dead?

Healthy trees may appear dead, even when they are not, such as deciduous trees that lose their leaves in winter. The best way to determine the health of a tree is to contact a professional arborist to inspect the tree. Like people, trees may be injured or sick, such as damaged by fire, insect infestation, or fungus, yet with proper care and time return to good health. Again, the services of an arborist can determine treatment methods. If an arborist has determined that the tree is dead, then it may be removed without a permit.

What about emergencies?

The City's Tree Preservation Ordinance allows the Rancho Cucamonga Fire Protection District or Planning Director to determine if a tree is in a dangerous condition requiring emergency action to remove without a permit.

More Information

The complete Tree Preservation Ordinance is available online at the City's website:

<http://www.cityofrc.us/cityhall/planning/>

Follow the Development Code link to Article III, Chapter 17.80. Printed copies of the Municipal Code are also available at the City Library and City Hall.

Tree Removal Permit Procedures

1. Is removal request in conjunction with a development application?

- If No, then go to question 2.
- If Yes, follow permit process in Ordinance (RCMC 19.08.070.B) briefly discussed below. At least a 10-day notice to adjoining property owners is required before City can make a decision on permit request.

2. Are more than 5 trees or 50 linear feet of windrow being removed?

- If No, follow the simplified permit process in Ordinance (RCMC 19.08.070.A).
- If Yes, follow permit process in Ordinance (RCMC 19.08.070.B). At least a 10-day notice to adjoining property owners is required before City can make a decision on permit request. Where request involves a development application, such as a Tentative Tract Map, Parcel Map, Conditional Use Permit, or Development Review, then the Tree Removal Permit request shall be considered by the Planning Commission concurrently with the development application.