



Valley Oak Tree Ordinance Follow Up Discussion



Review of Previous Discussion

- In January 2024, Parks and Urban Forestry staff met with City Council during a Work Session to introduce discussion about possible adjustments to the Valley Oak Tree Preservation Ordinance.
- Staff received comments including suggestions and feedback on the current ordinance.
- Council agreed with our recommendation to not require a permit for public utilities to prune or remove a Valley Oak tree as necessary to maintain a



Overview of Current Challenges

- **Operational Difficulties**

- Complex and time-consuming process for tree removal
- Increasing conflicts between tree preservation and property owners

- **Insurance and Property Risk**

- Increasing number of non-renewal letters from insurance companies
- Insurers citing significant risk from mature oak trees near structures

- **Recent Environmental Factors**

- Increased attention to tree failures during high wind and rain events has caused safety concerns for residents.



Removal and Pruning Permits Issued

Oak Tree Removal Requests								
	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Approved Removals	101	87	58	52	89	71	76	34
Denied Removals	14	7	7	2	6	2	1	
Mitigation Required	4	4		1			5	11
Assistance Provided					1	4	9	3
Appeals		1	1	2		1		
Under 18"	*	*	*	*	11	16	8	3
Construction	1	5	5	3	4	5	3	4
Infrastructure Damage	10	8	4	8	28	21	10	1
Dead/Diseased	25	19	20	15	23	20	18	7
Hazard/Limb Failures	25	12	24	19	27	23	10	7
Insurance Non-renewal	*	*	*	*	*	*	5	1
Oak Tree Pruning Requests								
	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Approved Prunings	48	36	75	72	62	45	54	14
Assistance Provided	3	1	2	0	1	2	3	1

- No Permit Required for Oak Trees under 18" D.B.H. and Oak tree removal added to assistance program in July 2021.



Overview of Suggestions and Feedback

- **Enhance Public Awareness:** Promote the Low-Income Assistance Program funded through mitigation funds.
- **Make Property Owner Actions Easier:** Simplify the process for property owners to remove valley oak trees while preserving Visalia's heritage and history with these trees.
- **Prioritize Safety:** Ensure individuals can take measures to protect their personal welfare.
- **Empower Property Owners:** Give property owners greater authority in making decisions regarding their property.

Staff Actions

- **Low-Income Assistance:** Staff has ensured the assistance form is made available to anyone requesting an oak tree removal application. It is also accessible on the same page as the online application on the city website.
- **Ordinance Adjustments:** Staff has reviewed tree ordinances from other California municipalities to address the feedback we received from council while keeping in mind the heritage of valley oak trees in Visalia. Options for adjustments to our ordinance have been created to present to Council.

Options for Ordinance Changes

Option 1: Modify Removal Criteria

Key Adjustments:

- Allow removal for trees causing damage to structures (foundations, walls, patios, decks, roofs, retaining walls, concrete, etc.)
- Permit removal for trees too close to structures (within drip line)
- Allow removal for trees in poor form due to safety or utility clearance pruning practices
- Permit removal to prevent substantial inconvenience or financial hardship to property owner
- Permit removal for property owners who have received a non-renewal notice from their insurance company

Benefits:

- Resolves insurance non-renewal issues related to Valley Oak trees
- Provides greater flexibility for property owners who need to remove their tree

Options for Ordinance Changes

Option 2: Partial Deregulation

Key Adjustment:

- Exemption for all existing single-family residential properties from requiring a permit.
- New subdivision development, multi-family, and commercial properties would still require a permit.

Benefits:

- Resolves insurance non-renewal issues related to Valley Oak trees
- Eliminates permit process burden for residential property owners
- Maintains environmental protections for new developments while balancing needs of existing homeowners

Options for Ordinance Changes

Option 3: Ordinance Elimination

Key Adjustments:

- Elimination of all permit requirements for Valley Oak tree removal
- Return full control of tree management to property owners
- Discontinue city oversight of Valley Oak tree management

Benefits:

- Provides complete autonomy over tree decisions on private property
- Eliminates city resources currently allocated to permit processing and enforcement
- Removes rules that may impede property improvements and maintenance

Options for Ordinance Changes

Option 4: Seek Further Input

Outreach:

- Present the previously presented options to the Parks & Recreation Commission for recommendation
- Present the previously presented options to the Citizens Advisory Committee for further feedback
- Perform public outreach meetings to receive feedback from the community

Benefits:

- Provide Council with input from various stakeholders on the Oak Tree Ordinance
- Community engagement and involvement in the process
- Educate residents on the Oak Tree Ordinance and permit process

Next Steps

- Receive direction from Council on proceeding with ordinance changes
- Receive public feedback on changing the ordinance
- Finalize ordinance revisions for council review



Questions and
Concerns?

