

Tree Preservation Regulations

Trees in the urban environment are one of the greatest resources a community can possess. Trees provide beauty, shade, wildlife habitat, reduce air pollutants, and protect the ground from soil erosion and flood hazards. Well-maintained trees also increase property values and add to a community's charm. The regulations strive to preserve and enhance the existing tree canopies on individual properties as well as overall neighborhoods.

In 1993 the City Council passed an ordinance to protect trees in the front yard in the residential "tree section" of Manhattan Beach. In 2003 the ordinance was expanded to all of Area Districts I & II, which includes all residential properties, excluding the Beach Area. In 2006 the ordinance was further revised to protect trees on the streetside yard on corner lots, provide pruning guidelines and require the planting of new trees with new construction projects. If you want to remove or relocate a tree or do construction near a tree in the 20 foot front yard or the streetside yard in these areas, you need a Tree Permit. Tree Permits are available from Planning in the Community Development Department or on the City's website at www.citymb.info/commdev/handouts/index.htm#planning. Pruning standards are available from the Tree Care Industry to non-members at their online store at www.treecareindustry.org.

The Tree Permit requires a tree plan which needs to show details of all of the existing and proposed tree(s) in the front and streetside yards, and the adjacent properties and public right-of-way, and the existing and proposed buildings, structures, septic tanks, walls, grading, and protective fencing.

New construction, including grading, driveways, walkways, patios, and utilities, need to be designed to accommodate and protect existing protected trees. During construction, trees to remain must be protected appropriately to ensure their health during the construction process. Generally, construction, including structures, walls, and grading, is discouraged within the dripline of the trees, which is the farthest extent of the canopy of the leaves. Additionally, temporary protective fencing must be provided as close to the dripline as feasible. Construction material and trash may not be stored within the protected area. Trees proposed to be removed may require a letter from an arborist stating why they need to be removed and neighbors must acknowledge in writing that they are aware of any proposed removal. Information on certified arborists is available from the International Society of Arboriculture at www.isa-arbor.com. Large replacement trees are generally required for any trees that are removed.

The tree preservation ordinance applies to trees with trunks a minimum 12-inch in diameter as measured 4-½ feet above ground level. Trees that are required to be planted as replacement trees for trees that are removed are also covered by the tree preservation regulations, even though their trunk diameter may be less than 12-inches. The ordinance does *not* apply to removal of deciduous fruit-bearing trees, or California or Mexican fan palms. There are provisions for emergency situations, trees extending across property lines and utility company safety requirements.

If you have more questions about our tree protection ordinance, please contact Ernest Area at earea@citymb.info or (310) 802-5305, visit the City's website at www.citymb.info, or see Section 10.52.120 of the MBMC. The City Council authorized the formation of a Tree Committee that can assist residents with information on the benefit of trees and proper tree care. The Committee can be reached at manhattancanopy@aol.com.