

Proposed Additions to the Los Osos Community Plan - Trees

Submitted by Lisa Denker, Vita Miller, Linde Owen and Tony Salome, Public Members of LOCAC Tree and Landscape Committee

Preservation, Maintenance and Growth of the Tree Population

The current tree population of Los Osos is decreasing drastically due to recent drought conditions, disease, decommissioning of septic systems and neglect. With the loss of trees, it is also a loss of part of our community character. Our large populations of Monterey Cypress, Monterey Pine, Italian Stone Pine, Coast Live Oak and Eucalyptus have declined. Being an asset to the community, trees conserve energy, clean the air, sequester carbon, provide storm water management, beautify our community, provide shade and improve the environmental, economic and quality of life in Los Osos. Therefore, understanding trees are a valuable resource to our community, it is essential that every effort be made to protect, maintain and expand our urban forest both on public and private lands. The County of San Luis Obispo will work with community agencies, members and leaders to achieve tree planting and preservation goals.

Benefits of Trees

Economic benefits - The urban forest contributes to the well-being of the residents of Los Osos in many ways. Trees add value to adjacent homes and business. Research shows that businesses on treescaped streets show 20% higher income streams. Realtor based estimates of street tree versus non-street tree comparable streets relate a \$15-25,000 increase in home and business value. This in turn adds to the tax base and operations budgets of the County.

Environmental benefits - Trees contribute to improving our air quality, water quality, and providing wildlife habitat. Trees leaf and branch structure absorb the first 30% of most precipitation, allowing evaporation back into the atmosphere. This moisture never hits the ground. Another 30% of precipitation is absorbed back into the ground and taken in and held onto by the root structure, then absorbed and transpired back to the air. Trees provide rain, sun, heat and wind protection shielding wildlife, humans and structures. Tree coverage offers shade from direct sunlight, shelter from the rain and lowering the air temperatures by 5-15 degrees. Trees and shrubs improve air quality by absorbing carbon dioxide and other pollutants, removing dust and sand particulates, and releasing oxygen. Carbon dioxide is absorbed for the photosynthetic process, but other emissions such as nitrogen oxides, carbon monoxide, and volatile organic compounds are reduced significantly from the proximity to trees. The leaves and shrubs filter the air from moving dust and sand particles. Urban street trees provide a canopy, for birds to enjoy, a root structure and setting important for insect and bacterial life below the surface; at grade for pets and people to enjoy, all of which connects the urban human to the natural environment.

Human benefits - Trees provide oxygen for humans. They release oxygen when they use energy from sunlight to make glucose from carbon dioxide and water. One large tree provides a day's supply of oxygen for up to four people. It is an indisputable fact that humans need trees to breathe and survive.

Social benefits - Trees seem to make life more pleasant in a couple of ways. They convert the streets, parking, and buildings into a more aesthetically pleasing environment. The paved roads, parking lots and structures that create cities are a grey visual and harsh environment without the trees and shrubs to soften and relieve the eyesore. Trees are an integral part of traffic calming measures. Trees also improve health, emotion, and wellbeing for all ages. Studies have shown that trees can reduce stress, and that views of trees can speed the recovery of surgical patients. The

advantage of trees expands past their physical benefits, by creating a more calming, visually pleasing environment for all to gain from.

Master Tree List

Develop a master inventory of existing trees in Los Osos. In addition, develop a suggested list of trees appropriate for planting in Los Osos with consideration of varied climate, soil and water conditions inherent to the community.

Natives Trees

A native tree is one that has not been introduced by man and occurs naturally. Native trees are adapted to local environmental conditions, requiring less water, saving perhaps the most valuable natural resource while providing vital habitat for birds and many other species of local wildlife. A list of trees native to Los Osos shall be identified. It is commonly understood that the Coast Live Oak is native to Los Osos while Monterey Cypress, Monterey Pine, California Sycamore found in Los Osos are California natives. Special attention should be given to the protection of native trees. Removal of native trees should be prohibited unless absolutely necessary and with special written permission from the County of San Luis Obispo. The only reasons for permission to be granted for native tree removal would be for those that endanger public safety or for new or redevelopment of land use. Whenever possible, new construction plans should include plans to work around existing native trees. If it is determined that native trees be removed, like replacement trees must be planted on the property at a ratio of 2:1.

Heritage Trees

Establish an inventory of heritage trees in the community. These trees may or may not be natives i.e. the Stone Pine found throughout our community; but by virtue of their species, age, size, rarity, as well as aesthetic, botanical, ecological and historical value – deserving of Heritage Tree protection status, signaling the importance of good arbor care and maintenance assuring that Heritage Trees will be preserved into the future. Mature trees are usually over 50 years old and will take 45 years to replace their size and beauty.

Invasives

Invasive trees are not to be planted. Invasive species cause ecological or economic harm in a new environment where it is not native. They adversely effect native trees and are capable of causing extinctions. Invasives including Robinia pseudoacacia commonly known as Black Locust, some Acacias, many Eucalyptus and others to be identified are to be avoided.

<https://www.cal-ipc.org/plants/profiles/>

Trees on Public Property

The community of Los Osos believes existing trees on public property owned by the County of San Luis Obispo need to be protected, maintained and replaced if removed. This includes right of way properties in the community. The community wishes to expand the tree population in Los Osos to include main thoroughfares and gateway locations. The County will assist the community in the expansion of our tree population.

Areas for Consideration for Tree Corridor Development Projects:

South Bay Blvd from Los Osos Valley Road to Santa Ysabel.

Los Osos Valley Road from South Bay Blvd to Pecho Valley Road @ Rodman.

El Moro from 3rd St to Santa Ysabel.

Santa Ysabel from South Bay Blvd to Pasadena.

The intersection of South Bay and Santa Ysabel.

The intersection of South Bay Blvd and Los Osos Valley Road.

Santa Ysabel route along 7th to Ramona Avenue to 9th Street to Los Osos Valley Road.

10th Street from Santa Ynez to Los Osos Valley Road.

An ongoing program should be developed to increase the presence of trees at the Los Osos Community Park and the Los Osos Library.

Neglected trees creating neighborhood safety issues or property damage should be reported to County Code Enforcement and Public works.

Tree Removal by County for Cause

No tree shall be removed from a public right-of-way unless it interferes with the necessary improvement of the public right-of-way, the installation of public utilities or is a hazard to person or property outside the drip line of the tree at maturity, or creates such a condition as to constitute a hazard or an impediment to the progress or vision of anyone traveling on or within the public right-of-way. If a tree is determined to meet the above criteria, it shall be posted for a minimum of seven days and all property owners and residents within three hundred feet shall be notified of the scheduled tree removal. If an appeal is not filed the tree shall then be removed and a new tree planted in the same location or in close proximity to the location where the tree was removed. The replacement tree shall be of the type as specified in the master tree list for that particular location, and the cost of removal and replacement shall be at the expense of the county.

Tree Protection Plans

Tree protection plans are required if any construction activity occurs within twenty feet of the drip line of any native tree. Activities include but are not limited to the following: remodeling or new construction, grading, road building, utility trenching, stockpiling of material, large machine access areas, etc.

If a project is expected to encroach on a trees drip line, special measures must be taken to protect the health of the tree and it's roots during the project. A temporary fence or physical barrier must be placed around the drip line before any construction begins. Areas that cannot be fenced at the drip line require a certified arborist review before any construction can begin.

Trees on Private Property

Owners of private property should be encouraged through community outreach and education to preserve existing trees and plant new trees. Any plans for new development should include trees in the landscaping. The planting of at least one tree common to the community is required. Please refer to the suggested list of appropriate trees for Los Osos.

Existing trees on private property are not to be removed unless permitted by existing County ordinances. Any trees removed must be replaced by at least one tree common to the community.

Neglected trees creating neighborhood safety issues or property damage should be reported to County Code Enforcement and Public works.

Trees on Commercial Property

New and established businesses should be encouraged to include trees in their landscape plans during new construction as well as renovation of properties. These trees should be selected from the approved Master Tree List for Los Osos.

Neglected trees creating neighborhood safety issues or property damage should be reported to County Code Enforcement and Public works.

Protection of Coastal Viewshed

Understanding that coastal areas of the community are a scenic resource of great public importance, all efforts should be made to protect the viewshed. Existing trees will be managed and protected. New trees planted in these areas should give careful consideration to species and size to avoid obstruction of scenic coastal areas with public view corridors. Planting plans should frame views and screen buildings out of the viewshed respecting the scenic and visual qualities of coastal areas.

Memorial Tree Grove

There is a need and interest to create a Memorial Tree Grove in the community similar to the Commemorative Grove Program at Laguna Park in the City of San Luis Obispo. There are many residents in the community who have lost loved ones who lived in Los Osos and family members and/or friends would like to have a living remembrance. A tree is a beneficial living memory of these individuals and the community as a whole. Efforts should be made to locate a suitable open space for a grove to be established where residents can plant a tree with a small memorial dedication plaque or sign. Once the property is secured and funded, a plan should be established whereby community residents can make an appropriate donation for the planting and maintenance of the memorial trees.

Multi-use Paths

Identify, plan and seek grant funding or alternate means to create multi-use tree lined paths throughout the community. Areas to consider are Los Osos Valley Road between Palisades and Doris, Pine Avenue from Los Osos Valley Road to Cuesta Inlet and Sweet Springs Preserve to Baywood Pier.

Community Reclaimed Water Use

The County will implement and begin a community reclaimed water use plan for residents of Los Osos. The plan will include access and use of all approved reclaimed water by community members for private and public landscape. The use shall include the 10th Street purple pipe hydrant and other pumping stations access to reclaimed water into approved containers or water trucks for tree watering delivery.