

## Tree Services Fact Sheet Bureau of Environment

### Protected Trees Ordinance

The City of Oakland's [Protected Trees Ordinance \(OMC 12.36\)](#) requires a permit for the removal of any tree on public or private property. There are two types of **Tree Removal Permits**:

- (1) development-related: a project requiring design review or a zoning, building, grading, or demolition permit
- (2) [non-development](#): when a property owner wishes to remove a tree on their property for any other reason.

Please see [www.oaklandtrees.info](http://www.oaklandtrees.info) for more information on tree removal permits.

### Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) for Trees

**Q: What do I do with the overgrown street trees that are in desperate need of pruning, interfering with the cable wires, and hanging over in the street blocking parking?**

Please read the "[Prune Your Own Street Tree Guidelines](#)" at [www.oaklandtrees.info](http://www.oaklandtrees.info) so you can prune them responsibly. The City does not have the resources to provide aesthetic pruning.

**Q: Will the City come and remove cones and leaves from the tree in front of my house that have dropped on the sidewalk and lawn?**

The City does not clean up the debris trees generate as part of the natural life cycle of a tree. Please keep the sidewalk in front of your property safe and clean. You can use your green compost cart to dispose of tree debris.

**Q: The tree in front of my house has roots pushing up the sidewalk and what should I do?**

Please report overgrown roots damaging the sidewalk to [OAK 311](#).

**Q: I don't have a street tree in front of my house - how do I plant one?**

Please follow the "[Plant Your Own Street Tree](#)" instructions on our website at [www.oaklandtrees.info](http://www.oaklandtrees.info).

**Q: I see trees touching a high voltage line in front of my house what should I do?**

Contact [PG&E](#) by calling for service at (800) 743-5000.

**Q: How do I get my neighbor to address a dead (hazardous) tree on their property?**

[Oakland Municipal Code Section 12.40.040](#) provides a process for neighbors to resolve these types of tree issues.

**Q: Why are Permit fees so high and where does the money go?**

Fees are set by the [City's Master Fee Schedule](#) and are assessed to cover staff costs associated with processing tree permits, including inspections and administrative requirements such as posting and noticing.

**Q: PG&E cut my tree but left the limbs. Who is responsible for removing them?**

[PG&E](#) is responsible to remove limbs when they trim trees for their power lines. Contact PG&E at 800-743-5000.

**Q: I called OAK 311 to report a leaning tree or possibly dead tree on City property and it seems to be taking a long time to be inspected. What's happening?**

Inspections are prioritized based on the level of risk. Please keep your service request number and contact [OAK 311](#) for status updates.



### Oakland City Maintenance Starts Here:

For routine issues, call 311 or contact us via:

- Call (510) 615-5566 (outside Oakland)
- Email: [OAK311@oaklandca.gov](mailto:OAK311@oaklandca.gov)
- Web: [311.oaklandca.gov](http://311.oaklandca.gov)
- Mobile App: [Apple/Google](#)



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Estimates show that Oakland's urban forest includes over 200,000 trees. Tree Services manages all trees in sidewalks/streets, medians, City parks, and within the City's right of way. A 2015 tree canopy survey estimated that trees cover approximately 24.7% of Oakland. This puts Oakland in about the mid-range of cities in the Bay Area for the size of its urban forest. An inventory of street and park trees is currently underway to count Oakland's trees. The results will help the City plan for the future of Oakland's urban forest.

City trees provide many environmental and health benefits. Trees absorb carbon, remove pollution from the air, reduce flooding during storms, prevent erosion, and provide wildlife habitat. Studies show that trees also reduce stress and shorten recovery periods after surgery. The presence of street trees in a neighborhood slows traffic, reduces crime, and encourages people to spend time outside.

The healthier our trees are, the better they perform. Tree maintenance is necessary to ensure proper growth and stability for trees to provide these benefits.

### Funding & Staffing

The Landscape & Lighting Assessment District (LLAD) provides \$2.5 million annually for tree maintenance. The budget funds 15 full-time employees: one senior supervisor, one administrative assistant, two arboricultural inspectors, one crew supervisor, two high climbers, and eight tree trimmers. Measure BB funds an additional crew supervisor and three tree trimmers. The Tree Services team is responsible for managing over 200,000 trees, which includes: inspecting trees, removing hazardous trees, responding to tree emergencies (e.g. a fallen tree blocking a street), and issuing permits per the Oakland Protected Trees Ordinance (OMC 12.36).

Prior to 2008, when severe budget reductions were implemented, Tree Services was able to attend to high-maintenance trees every three to five years. For example, the pollarded sycamores seen around lake Merritt were on a six-year pruning schedule. Tree Services planted an average of 1,000 street trees a year. In 2008, nearly half of the Tree Services unit was eliminated due to lack of funding. The tree planting program, tree watering, aesthetic pruning, and pollarding services were all eliminated.

Since 2008, Oakland Public Works Tree Services prunes and removes trees based on risk level and on an emergency basis only. Three categories determine the response for tree-related work:

**Priority 1:** Emergency. In fiscal year 2018-19, OPW responded to **954** Priority 1 service requests. Examples of Priority 1 include:

- Tree Down – Tree that has fallen and is blocking a path of travel or damaging property
- Limb Down – Limb that has fallen and is blocking a path of travel or damaging property
- Large Broken/Hanging Limb – if causing an immediate safety hazard
- Tree blocks a traffic signal or regulatory street sign (Stop/Yield/Do Not Enter)

**Priority 2:** Potential risk to public safety. In fiscal year 2018-19, OPW responded to **859** Priority 2 service requests. Examples of Priority 2 include:

- Dead, dying, or diseased trees that are still standing
- Blocks pedestrian clearance (lower than 8 feet)
- Blocks vehicle traffic (lower than 14 feet)
- Interagency pruning requests (clearance for city infrastructure, such as for street sweeping or street paving)

**Priority 3:** Routine maintenance, which is currently not funded. Examples include:

- Aesthetic or routine pruning
- Stump grinding