

Draft -- Attachment D

The Bel Air-Beverly Crest Neighborhood Council supports the recommendations given in the TREE AND BIODIVERSITY PLANNING AND THE CITY'S URBAN CANOPY AND TREE CANOPY COVERAGE report delivered to City Council on July 28, 2023, as well as the amendments made by Councilmembers Raman.

While BABCNC wholeheartedly supports the idea of building and maintaining a healthy urban forest, we are skeptical that the recommendations in the report will achieve the desired results without first establishing clear and attainable goals. Once specific goals are set, reasonable and effective policies can be designed to ensure those goals are met.

Our Council represents an area of the City blessed with an abundant tree canopy. We recognize that other areas are not so fortunate and do not enjoy the many benefits that improved tree coverage would provide. Attention to equity is and must be a critical element of any urban forestry initiatives.

While we support the planting of new trees throughout the city, we believe that the preservation of existing trees is the most efficient and cost-effective means of assuring a healthy tree canopy, and that maintaining our existing tree canopy should be a priority. We therefore applaud the recommendations for greater interdepartmental communications and disclosure of on-site trees as well as CM Raman's recommendations related to protected trees.

Research shows that tree canopy is being removed across all areas of the City. There are reasons for this that we see in our neighborhood and throughout the City. We see undeveloped lots with abundant greenery, including protected trees, being scraped to earth regularly, often before any permits are requested. Every year, Los Angeles has a decrease in its overall tree canopy coverage despite the effort to plant more trees due to the removal of our existing canopy. For this reason, the measures recommended by CM Raman, and adopted by Council, should be implemented at the soonest possible time, without delay and without a lengthy report back.

If we truly want there to be more trees on private property and on streets, then policy choices must be made that gives trees the space they need to grow and thrive.

We note that the following current City policies and priorities are contributing to the loss of our urban canopy:

- Mansionization;
- Density Promotion;
- ADU Parking Space Policy; and
- Meager setback requirements.

We also recommend the following policy choices for preservation of mature trees:

- Removal of such trees must be discouraged by strong regulations;
- The introduction of a "Significant Tree Ordinance" which would protect all trees of a significant size, and not just our current 6 protected tree species;
- City employees must presume that tree-related clearances are necessary when a vacant lot is being developed; and
- City employees must access recent and past satellite images to verify developer claims regarding existing trees.