



## Tree Services Fact Sheet

### Bureau of Facilities & Environment

Oakland's urban forest, which Tree Services is the custodian, consists of over 200,000 trees. This estimate is based on a 2007 sidewalk survey that identified 46,624 street trees (trees between the sidewalk and street), as well as trees in City parks and open space, on medians and streetscapes, and trees found within the City's right-of-way. A recent tree canopy survey conducted through a grant from CAL Fire estimated that approximately 24.7% of Oakland is covered in trees. This puts Oakland in about the mid-range of cities in the Bay Area for the size of its urban forest.

Trees growing in the urban landscape provide a variety of benefits in addition adding beauty to our streets, parks, and open spaces. They enhance the environment in which we live by absorbing carbon and other pollutants, improving air quality, mitigating stormwater runoff, preventing erosion, and providing habitat for wildlife. Studies show that trees provide health benefits for people, such as reducing stress and shortening recovery periods after surgery. The presence of street trees also contributes social benefits by slowing traffic, improving walkability, and reducing crime.

The healthier our trees are, the better they perform. Tree maintenance is necessary to ensure proper growth and stability to realize these and many other 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. This team is responsible for over 200,000 trees including: tree inspections for hazardous conditions, hazardous tree trimming and removal, emergency tree response, tree removal permits on public and private property, and self-pruning permits.

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 trimming 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.

Currently, Oakland Public Works Tree Services performs tree trimming and removals based upon hazardous tree assessments and on emergency basis only. Three categories determine response for tree-related work.

**Priority 1:** Considered an emergency. In fiscal year 2014-15, OPW responded to **1,023** Priority 1 service requests.

Examples of Priority 1 include:

- Tree Down – Tree that has uprooted/broken blocking street/sidewalk/pathway/damage to property
- Limb Down – Limb that has broken and is blocking street/sidewalk/pathway/damage to property
- Broken/Hanging Limb – Potentially could cause an immediate safety hazard
- Any immediate situation that threatens public safety in the street or public right-of-way

**Priority 2:** Trees pose a potential risk to public safety. In fiscal year 2014-15, OPW responded to **635** Priority 2 service requests. Examples of Priority 2 include:

- Tree blocks a street light, traffic light, regulatory street sign (Stop/Yield/Do Not Enter)
- Blocks pedestrian clearance (lower than 7 feet)
- Blocks vehicle traffic (lower than 14 feet)

**Priority 3:** Considered routine maintenance; routine maintenance is not scheduled. Examples include:

- Aesthetic pruning or trimming



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### Tree Protection Ordinance

The City of Oakland has a tree protection ordinance that governs tree removal on public and private property. A Tree Removal Permit is required to remove a tree on either public or private property. There are two types of **Tree Removal Permits**: (1) development projects – a project requiring design review or zoning, building, grading or demolition permit and (2) non-development – when a property owner wishes to remove a tree on their property. **For more information on tree removal permits please see [www.oaklandpw.com/tree](http://www.oaklandpw.com/tree).**

### 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 City Tree Guidelines” at [www.oaklandpw.com/tree](http://www.oaklandpw.com/tree) 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 the natural life cycle of a tree. Please keep 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 the Public Works Call Center: see methods below.
- Q: I don't have a street tree in front of my house – how do I plant one?**  
Great! Please follow the “Plant Your Own Street Tree” instructions on our website at [www.oaklandpw.com/tree](http://www.oaklandpw.com/tree).
- Q: I see trees touching a high voltage line in front of my house what should I do?**  
Contact PG& by calling for service at (800) 743-5000.
- Q: How do I get my neighbor to address a dead (hazardous) tree on their property?**  
The 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 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 reported a leaning tree/ or what appears to be a dead on City property and it seems to be taking a long time to be inspected – what's happening?**  
Inspections are done on a hazardous priority level. We respond to hazardous situations first. An inspection does not necessarily result in the tree being removed. Please report suspect trees to the Public Works Call Center.



### Report a Problem – for City of Oakland Infrastructure

Oakland Public Works Call Center can be reached in several ways:

- Call (510) 615-5566
- Email [opwcallcenter@oaklandnet.com](mailto:opwcallcenter@oaklandnet.com)
- Online at [Report a Problem](#)
- Mobile or web app at [SeeClickFix](#)