

For Immediate Release
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Stiffer Fines for Removing Trees Without a Permit

San José, California – Residents and companies who remove trees in San José without a permit will face stiffer fines starting July 7, following today's action by the San José City Council. In addition, the public will be given an additional week to comment on tree removal permit requests.

The fines apply to street trees greater than six feet tall in the public right of way and to trees on private property with a trunk larger than 56" in circumference (about 18" in diameter). These trees are protected by the San José Municipal Code. The City's Transportation Department oversees street trees, while trees on private property are overseen by the Department of Planning, Building and Code Enforcement.

The fine for removing a street tree without a permit will now range from \$500 to \$2,000 -- up from \$300 to \$500, depending on trunk diameter. For illegal removal of trees on private property, the fine will now range between \$1,500 and \$2,000 instead of the former flat rate fine of \$500. In addition, fines for repeat offenders will double and triple for violations within a three-year period. Both the property owner and the tree removal company, or individuals, are subject to these fines.

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The fines for Heritage Trees, which have been designated as such by the City Council for increased protection, will now begin at \$10,000, and may be as high as \$30,000 for multiple offenses. Previously, the fine was \$5,000.

In addition, the posting period for street trees, which allows residents to protest the removal of any street tree in San Jose, will increase from seven to 14 days. This will allow additional time for those who are concerned about the removal of a street tree to file a letter of protest, which will then trigger a hearing by the City to review the matter.

These measures have been adopted in response to requests from San José residents to reduce the number of trees removed without permits and to ensure adequate opportunity for public input into the process. These actions will help San José protect and maintain a healthy urban forest, thereby contributing to the attractiveness and livability of our community.

For more information about street tree permits, contact the City Arborist at (408) 277-2762 or arborist@sanjoseca.gov. For information about permits for trees on private property, contact the Department of Planning, Building, and Code Enforcement at (408) 277-4528. Anyone witnessing an illegal tree removal in progress in San José should contact the City's 24-hour Customer Service Call Center at (408) 535-3500 to report it.

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