

Communication from Public

Name: South LA Tree Coalition
Date Submitted: 09/17/2025 08:23 PM
Council File No: 21-1230-S10
Comments for Public Posting: The South LA Tree Coalition letter of opposition to file 21-1230-S10 attached.



September 16, 2025

Honorable Members of the Los Angeles City Council
200 N. Spring Street
Los Angeles, CA 90012

Re: Opposition to CF 21-1230-S10 - Removing BPW Authority Over Tree Removals

Dear Council President and Council Members:

We are writing in strong opposition to the recent City Council motion - Council File 21-1230-S10, that seeks to remove the Board of Public Works' (BPW) authority to review development projects requiring the removal of three (3) or more street trees.

Currently, the BPW provides a critical check-and-balance in the process of approving tree removals. This oversight not only ensures that removals are not made hastily or without accountability, but it also provides an important avenue for public engagement. Community members, neighborhood councils, and advocacy groups can testify before the BPW, ensuring transparency and giving voice to residents who are directly impacted. Removing this step would eliminate one of the few forums in which Angelenos—particularly those living in low-canopy neighborhoods—can advocate for the preservation of trees in their communities.

It is true that both the BPW and the Urban Forestry Division (UFD) rarely exercise their authority to deny removals. However, the fact that the authority exists is itself a safeguard. As our city faces worsening heat waves, persistent air quality issues, and significant inequities in canopy coverage, it is critical that we retain every mechanism we have to protect and expand Los Angeles' urban forest. Stripping the BPW of this role would weaken oversight at precisely the moment we should be strengthening protections.

Furthermore, preserving BPW authority aligns with the City's broader climate and equity commitments. In neighborhoods with historically low canopy coverage, the loss of mature street trees can exacerbate urban heat islands, worsen public health outcomes, and diminish residents' quality of life. Allowing these removals to proceed without BPW review risks compounding these inequities.

The City of Los Angeles has made housing production a priority, as reflected in Mayor Bass' Executive Directive 1 and the implementation of the Housing Element. Our city urgently needs more affordable housing. However, our commitment to addressing the housing crisis cannot come at the expense of trees, nature, and the green spaces that make our neighborhoods livable and resilient.

Moreover, in many new developments, the inclusion of meaningful open space is limited or absent. This makes protecting existing street trees even more essential. If we remove oversight and weaken protections now, the inequities in canopy coverage will only deepen, leaving vulnerable communities with fewer resources to withstand climate change.

For these reasons, I urge the Council to reject any proposal that would diminish the role of the Board of Public Works in overseeing street tree removals. Instead, I encourage the City to strengthen both BPW and UFD's review authority, and to better resource these bodies so they can meaningfully protect our city's tree canopy.

Thank you for your consideration.

Theresa Maysonet

Respectfully,
Theresa Maysonet
Co-Founder, South LA Tree Coalition