



Date: October 2, 2007
To: Honorable Mayor and City Council
From: Vice Mayor Bonnie Lowenthal, First District *BL*
Subject: Meandering Sidewalks to Save Tree Roots

Large tree roots often grow with a strength that uproots sidewalks and parkways. Old-growth trees provide significant environmental benefits, shade, and historic character to streets in Long Beach, but communities must balance their desire to preserve old-growth trees with the safety issues that result from rising, sloping, and fracturing of the public sidewalks.

The Department of Public Works and the City arborists work together to save every tree possible on public property. Common strategies to repair sidewalks and prevent future damage of sidewalks from large tree roots include root pruning, root cutting, and tree removal. Tree cutting is used as a last resort only when other options are not viable. On limited streets in the City, when the right-of-way did not require obtaining an easement from the property owner, the Public Works Department has created "meandering sidewalks" to save the old-growth trees while repairing the sidewalks. These meandering sidewalks provide a picturesque demonstration of alternative solutions to removing trees and should be maximized throughout the City to protect our old-growth trees.

As part of the City of Long Beach's demonstrated commitment to trees in our community, which includes working to receive the designation of "Tree City, USA" and creating an Urban Forest Master Plan to plant thousands of additional trees, we should also be employing every state-of-the-art practice to keep current trees on our streets, prolong the life of trees, and protect our trees from future removal.

Recommended action:

I respectfully request that the City Manager work with the Department of Public Works and the Long Beach Tree Committee to determine the feasibility, rights-of-way, legal and property line issues, cost, and workload of incorporating meandering sidewalks into the City's tree root repair programs, when applicable. The Public Works Department should communicate with other cities utilizing similar methods to save old-growth trees to share research and information.