City of Long Beach
Working Together to Serve

Office of Gerrie Schipske
Councilwoman, Fifth District
Memorandum

Date: January 5, 2010

To: HONORABLE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF THE CITY COUNCIL

From: Councilwoman Gerrie Schipske, Fifth District

Subject: **AGENDA ITEM: Revision of City Policy Prohibiting Removal of
            Mature City Trees even when Trees have Caused Damage to Private
            Property**

DISCUSSION:

The City of Long Beach has many mature trees in parking strips (the space between the
sidewalks and the streets) in front of residences. These trees were planted at a time
when arborists were not concerned or knowledgeable about the damage the trees can
cause to sidewalks, curbs, streets, sewer lines and plumbing.

Long Beach has also become a designated "Tree City, USA" and adopted regulations
which require that trees be preserved, and their removal can only be approved by the
City Tree Committee and only for reasons concerning the health of the tree.

The Fifth Council District has the most sidewalk and mature trees. As these trees
mature they are causing lifted sidewalks and damage to other City infrastructure as well
as residential and business sewer and plumbing lines. When a resident or business
requests that the "offending tree" be removed and replaced, they are told "no."

Most recently, the Los Altos United Methodist Church, 5950 E. Willow St., has
requested the removal of several ficus trees that continue to invade the church's sewer
lines. Over the past six years, the church has expended over $32,000 in sewer line
repair because of the trees. The same trees have severely damaged the public
sidewalks which are potential hazards and which are slated for repair in the next few
weeks. However, unless the offending trees are removed and replaced, the damages
and hazards will continue.

RECOMMENDATION

Request City Attorney to assess on a case-by-case basis whether or not removal of a
City owned tree is warranted because of the damage to public and/or private property
and the continuing liability to the City.