



Frequently Asked Questions

Tree Removals at Aubrey Austin Park

What is happening at Aubrey Austin Jr. Park?

The Department of Beaches and Harbors' (DBH) Aubrey Austin Jr. Park Improvement Project in Marina del Rey is underway to enhance the park's accessibility, recreational amenities, and tree health.

The project aims to preserve the park's mature trees, improve pedestrian access, and create a more enjoyable community and visitor experience.

Key improvements include:

- Upgrading walkways to meet Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) standards
- Installing four permanent lounge chairs and several concrete seats along the promenade
- Replacing damaged paths to improve pedestrian flow, safety and recreational options
- Reducing the amount of concrete, installing root barriers, and upgrading the park's irrigation system to save water and provide a better environment for trees

How many trees will be removed? Why do you have to remove them?

Two trees (referred to as VM-27 and VM-28) will be removed to accommodate a replacement public promenade, which serves as both a maintenance and emergency access road. **The trees will be replaced during the project.**

These mature trees that are near the end of their life have large structural roots that must be pruned to install the promenade. Pruning these roots compromises the trees' stability, increasing the likelihood of falling and creating a safety hazard. While DBH adjusted the promenade's path to save a third tree, no feasible alternatives were available to preserve trees VM-27 and VM-28, as materials like decomposed granite do not meet ADA standards and cannot support the weight of emergency vehicles. Building a bridge over the tree roots that is both ADA-compliant and able to withstand regular vehicular travel would be impractical and cost prohibitive, and ultimately serve only as a temporary accommodation, as growing tree roots would eventually undermine the bridge's foundation. It is important to note that this project was designed to protect the park's existing trees, and DBH had not initially planned to remove any trees. The decision



followed further examination of the trees' extensive root systems during walkway demolition.

Why is this project needed—can't you just leave the park as it is?

This project is necessary to create a park layout that supports both visitor enjoyment and tree health. Here's what the improvement plan will achieve:

- **Adequate Space for Coral Trees:** The current design doesn't provide enough room for these large trees to grow safely. By removing excess sidewalks and turf around tree roots, the trees will have more space and less root stress.
- **Improved Water Management:** The upgraded irrigation system will prevent overwatering of mature trees, which can weaken their structure, while ensuring that young trees and other plants receive the water they need.
- **Long-Term Tree Health:** Root barriers will be added along the promenade to reduce the need for future root pruning, supporting the coral trees' health and stability.
- **Enhanced Visitor Experience:** ADA-compliant walkways and new seating will make the park more accessible and comfortable for all visitors.

Will the trees be replaced?

Yes. Each removed coral tree will be replaced with a *Metrosideros excelsa* (New Zealand Christmas tree), which is a more appropriate species for the local microclimate and marine conditions. All replacement trees will be planted within the park area.

Why aren't you replacing the trees with new coral trees?

While coral trees are beautiful, they are not well suited to Marina del Rey's environment. Here are the main reasons why the New Zealand Christmas tree (*Metrosideros excelsa*) was selected as a safer, more sustainable alternative:

- **High Maintenance Requirements:** Coral trees need frequent pruning, generally in the spring, and sometimes twice a year; however, the Local Coastal Program (LCP), which protects nesting birds in the area, limits non-emergency tree maintenance to October, November, and December. This prevents coral trees from being pruned at the optimal time.
- **Safety and Structural Concerns:** Coral trees grow quickly and can become top-heavy with brittle branches, posing risks to public safety. When planted close to

other trees or buildings, they tend to grow narrower and taller, increasing the likelihood of branches breaking or even entire trees becoming unstable.

- **Water Sensitivity:** Coral trees in Marina del Rey receive more water than their species requires due to the shallow water table, allowing them to access groundwater easily. Combined with regular grass irrigation, this excess water causes the trees to grow too quickly, adding excessive weight to branches and increasing the risk of breakage, instability, and potential safety hazards for the community.
- **A Safer, Sustainable Choice:** The New Zealand Christmas tree was chosen as a replacement because it thrives in the Marina's marine climate and requires less maintenance. It also has a similar appearance to coral trees, allowing it to blend well with the park's landscape while offering a safer option for visitors.

For more information on the Aubrey Austin Jr. Park Improvement Project, visit bit.ly/AubreyAustinPark.