**California Council of the American Society of Landscape Architects Update**

June 10, 2025

It has been a busy year in Sacramento so far. As we noted in January, California’s Democratic leaders pride themselves on resisting the policies and perspectives of President Trump. As such, the Legislature has been busy with a flurry of bills “Trump-proofing” numerous aspects of California State Government as much as possible. These bills are often controversial and create a significant amount of debate in the Legislature.

At the same time, the Governor and Legislature are grappling with significant and ongoing budget deficits for the first time in years. The Governor’s May Revision to the Budget identified a $12 billion deficit. In reality, it is a larger deficit but the Governor is proposing to rely on $7 billion in reserves to reduce its size.

While the Assembly and Senate have come to an agreement on a budget proposal, they have yet to reach agreement with the Governor on how to close the deficit. Negotiations will continue through the end of the month and beyond.

The bigger problem for the Governor and legislative leadership is that the state will face deficits ranging from $10 to $20 billion between now and at least the 28/29 budget year. Looming over this is the fact that the Federal Government is poised to significantly reduce funding to California exacerbating these deficits.

**Zone 0**

For the last three months, our firm and CCASLA’s Board have spent significant time engaging with the California State Board of Forestry and Fire Protection (the Board) on its proposed Zone 0 regulations.

In 2020 the state Legislature passed and the Governor signed a bill requiring the Board to promulgate regulations creating an “ember resistant” zone in the first five feet around a structure. The Board was slow to adopt these regulations. However, in the wake of the tragic fires in Los Angeles earlier this year, Governor Newsom directed the Board to complete its work on Zone 0 by the end of 2025.

While the Board has not begun a formal rulemaking process, they have proposed a set of draft regulations. Among other things, these regulations eliminate all vegetation in Zone 0 unless it is a potted plant. While the bole of a tree is allowed within Zone 0, the proposed regulations would prohibit the crown of the tree from being within 10 feet of the roof of a structure. An earlier version of the draft would have gone a step further, limiting all vegetation within 10 feet of a home to a heigh of 2 feet.

Our firm has expressed concerns with these regulations on CCASLA’s behalf both to the Board and to the Natural Resources Agency which oversees the Board’s work. While the regulation does not explicitly ban mature trees CCASLA believes that will be the de facto result of the regulations. That is especially true in the denser urban communities of southern California where small lots often mean that mature trees will easily encroach on a structure.

In addition, there is little to no evidence to suggest that all vegetation is a danger in zone 0. In fact, properly selected and maintained vegetation has been shown to help mitigate fire risk to structures.

Finally, the Zone 0 regulations do not accommodate other state and local goals. In particular, shade requirements become challenging when maintaining mature trees is not feasible.

While much work remains to be done on this issue, CCASLA has had some initial success. While others have raised similar concerns with the regulation, CCASLA brings an air of legitimacy and credibility to the issue given the professional competency of its members. Consistent with our recommendations, the Board has given up on expanding regulations in the first five feet of Zone 1 (5-10 feet from a structure). In addition, the Board has decided to extend its informal rulemaking process giving CCASLA more time to advocate on the draft regulations both before the Board and before other policymakers.

We will continue to engage on this issue and keep you apprised of further developments.