

Best Practices #008, Historic Tree Project
Heading: Publicity and Community Affairs
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In 2002, the City of Walnut Creek, California was forced to cut down a 300-year old valley oak. The tree was diseased and overhanging a day care center. Native to Northern California, the valley oak is protected and older specimens are designated 'heritage oaks'.

The City arranged for all parts of the tree to be saved and stored on an adjacent lot. The Bedford Gallery, a local nonprofit, took possession of the parts and invited artists from Northern California, including the Bay Area Woodturners, to collect some of the wood. Each artist agreed to return a year later with at least one piece of art made substantially from the tree.

After collecting the finished pieces, the gallery hung a large public exhibit of the recycled art. At the artist's discretion, pieces were for sale. There was considerable publicity for the City, the gallery and the artists.

If your community has a tree that must be taken down, has some historic or nostalgic significance and would yield a good quantity of turn-able wood, you might consider holding a historic tree project. If a lot of people would like to own a piece of the old tree, you might consider conducting it as a fund-raiser.

The greatest challenge to this kind of project is keeping the interest alive over the year between the cutting and the final display of the finished pieces.

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