



**CITY OF SANTA BARBARA**  
**PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION REPORT**

**AGENDA DATE:** April 24, 2024  
**TO:** Parks and Recreation Commission  
**FROM:** Parks Division, Parks and Recreation Department  
**SUBJECT:** Street Tree Advisory Committee Recommendations

**RECOMMENDATION:** That the Commission:

A. Conditionally approve the following setback tree removal requests:

1. 230 Alameda Padre Serra – *Eucalyptus globulus*, Tasmanian Blue Gum – Jason Roberts

The Committee reviewed the Blue Gum Eucalyptus proposed for removal noting it was in fair shape overall, with some decline exhibited throughout the canopy. The Committee reviewed the reasons listed on the application for removal, which included safety concerns of tree failure, citing a recent failure of a tree of the same species and similar size across the street. The Committee discussed the tree and its contribution to the site, remarking that it appeared maintenance had not taken place in many years. Members pointed out that there were native Coast Live Oak and Toyon adjacent to the tree and that the removal of the tree would be of significant benefit to the native trees. While not specifically noted on the application the Committee also discussed the tree's condition and location in the Foothill High Fire Hazard Zone and that this section of Alameda Padre Serra is a major evacuation route for people living in this neighborhood. As discussion continued, they reviewed findings and determined that the removal of the existing Blue Gum Eucalyptus would not materially affect the neighborhood. Despite the benefits gained by additional sunlight aiding in the growth of the native trees, the Committee also conditioned the planting of a new tree that could reach a height of 30 feet at maturity to help offset the loss of the existing tree.

After review, the Committee determined that pursuant to SBMC 15.24.090 (C.) that the character of the immediate neighborhood with respect to forestation will not be materially affected by the proposed removal.

The Committee recommends (4/0) that the Commission approve the removal on the condition that the applicant replace with another tree on the property that can achieve 30 feet in height at maturity.

2. 952 Alameda Padre Serra – (2) *Schinus molle*, Pepper Tree – Gail Fisher

The Committee reviewed the two Pepper Trees proposed for removal, noting both trees were in good health and reasonably maintained. The Committee evaluated the reasons listed on the application for removal, which included improvements to the property. The applicant explained that it was their hope to build a new accessory dwelling unit behind their home and one of the requirements was off street parking. Due to the layout of the parcel the only place for a parking spot was on the Roble Lane side of the property and the two Pepper Trees were in direct conflict with the proposed parking spot. To offset the loss of the existing trees the applicant proposed installing two new Pepper Trees as part of improvements to the property. The Committee reviewed the project and noted that it constituted a reasonable development of property. Additionally, they noted that the proposal to replace the lost Pepper Trees in like kind with new Pepper Trees made good practical sense and that they were supportive of the proposed replacements. After review, the Committee recommended approval of the project as proposed.

After review, the Committee determined that pursuant to SBMC 15.24.090 (B.) that a reasonable and practical development of the property on which the tree is located requires removal of the tree or trees whose removal is sought.

The Committee recommends (4/0) that the Commission approve the removals as proposed on the application.

3. 403 E. Valerio Street – *Platanus x hispanica*, London Plane Tree – Liz and Jon Brady

The Committee reviewed the London Plane Tree proposed for removal, noting it was in fair health. They evaluated the reasons listed on the application for removal, which included a desire to remove the tree due to its continual competition with the neighboring Oak tree. The applicant also raised concern regarding the London Plane Tree's propensity to develop powdery mildew and it spreading to portions of the Oak tree. The Committee discussed the issues and generally agreed that the London Plane Tree conflicted with the Oak and that the Oak was a much more valuable species. Additionally, members noted that the London Plane Tree has been known to hybridize with native California Sycamores and its presence in the urban forest was problematic for this reason. After review, the Committee determined that the removal of the existing London Plane Tree satisfied the principles of good forest management due to its ability to hybridize with native trees and the problems that it caused with the existing Oak tree.

After review, the Committee determined that pursuant to SBMC 15.24.090 (A.) that principles of good forest management will be best served by the proposed removal.

The Committee recommends (4/0) that the Commission approve the removal as proposed.

B. Deny the following setback tree removal requests:

1. 2501 Medcliff Road – *Schinus terebinthifolius*, Brazilian Pepper – Guillaume de Zwirek

The Committee reviewed the Brazilian Pepper Tree proposed for removal, noting the tree was in good health and well maintained. They reviewed the reasons listed on the application for removal, which included a desire to remove the tree because it was invasive and has allelopathic properties. Allelopathy is when a plant generates a chemical inhibition of other plants due to the release of substances into the neighboring environment. The Committee noted that while Brazilian Pepper can germinate on its own, this location would not be problematic due to landscape maintenance occurring on the property. Members also remarked that the existing tree was a nice healthy specimen and while they understood the desires of the homeowners to move in a different direction, there was no suitable finding at this time that would support removal of the tree. After review, the Committee determined that the tree was in good health of value to the property.

After review, the Committee determined that at this time no findings pursuant to SBMC 15.24.090 satisfied this request.

The Committee recommends (4/0) that the Commission deny the removal.

2. 1518 Bath Street – *Araucaria columnaris*, Cook Pine – Mike Gones

The Committee reviewed the Cook Pine proposed for removal, noting that the tree appeared to be in good health and reasonably maintained. They evaluated the reasons listed on the application for removal, which consisted of a desire to remove the tree due to the tree's lean, roots damaging the patio, and roots growing towards the home. The applicant also provided a letter from a consulting arborist who suggested removal due to the presence of a longitudinal crack in the tree, suggesting that it may be indicative of a structural defect. Members commented that the tree did have a pronounced lean but that it was common for this species to lean and that the tree showed a positive phototropic response. Phototropism is a phenomenon by which plants/trees bend towards the direction of light. When trees develop a lean and then over time reorient themselves upright or towards vertical, it is known as a phototropic response. They discussed the seam that was present in the trunk and generally agreed that it appeared to be a superficial crack and not of structural concern. Additionally, they commented that repairs would allow for the damaged concrete walkway that would allow for tree retention.

After review, the Committee determined that at this time no findings pursuant to SBMC 15.24.090 satisfied this request.

The Committee recommends (3/0/1) that the Commission deny the removal.

3. 3626 Rockcreek Road – *Liquidambar styraciflua*, American Sweetgum – Louis Manzo

The Committee reviewed the American Sweetgum proposed for removal, commenting it was in good health and well maintained. They reviewed the reasons listed on the application for removal, which included safety concerns for residents of the property and neighborhood due to fruit dropping from the tree. The applicant also noted damage to the retaining wall from tree roots. Additionally, they expressed a concern with being able to insure the property, referencing previous cancellation of insurance on the home by private insurers due to the tree's proximity to the home. The Committee remarked that while it can be a challenge debris has never been a valid criteria for tree removal. Members commented that options like root pruning were available to allow for repairs without having to remove the tree. Lastly, members discussed the challenges of insuring homes in certain areas of town, commenting that in most cases pruning can remediate issues.

After review, the Committee determined that at this time no findings pursuant to SBMC 15.24.090 satisfied this request.

The Committee recommends (4/0) that the Commission deny the removal.

- ATTACHMENTS:**
1. 230 Alameda Padre Serra
  2. 952 Alameda Padre Serra
  3. 403 E. Valerio Street
  4. 2501 Medcliff Road
  5. 1518 Bath Street
  6. 3626 Rockcreek Road

**PREPARED BY:** Nathan Slack, Urban Forest Superintendent

**APPROVED BY:** Jill E. Zachary, Parks and Recreation Director