



CITY OF SANTA BARBARA
PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION REPORT

AGENDA DATE: February 25, 2026

TO: Parks and Recreation Commission

FROM: Parks Division, Parks and Recreation Department

SUBJECT: Street Tree Advisory Committee Recommendations

RECOMMENDATION: That Commission:

A. Approve the following street tree removal request:

1. 740 Dolores Drive – (9) various native street trees, and (46) various ornamental trees – Kelly Bourque on behalf of the City of Santa Barbara

On December 5, 2025, the Committee reviewed the tree removal application for the Vic Trace Reservoir replacement project. They heard a project overview from Water Resources staff and comments from members of the public. After review, the Committee made a recommendation to approve the proposed removals on the condition that the project replace trees at a 2:1 replacement ratio and that the project protect tree number 11, a coast live oak, in place.

At the request of the applicant, they withdrew their application to allow further study to evaluate the feasibility of increasing the total number of new trees. The applicant also wanted to determine if they could address additional comments from the Committee and the public comments about increasing habitat on-site, specifically for raptors and increasing native tree species.

The Committee reviewed the revised application and heard an updated presentation from Water Resources staff about the proposed project to replace the Vic Trace Reservoir. The Committee commented that based upon the scope of the project, the proposed removals constituted a reasonable and practical development of the property.

Regarding mitigation, the project proposed replacing the trees with a one-to-one ratio, focusing on utilizing native tree species. The applicant kept the number of newly proposed replacement species the same from the initial review due to constraints on site with infrastructure and high fire hazard zone landscaping requirements. The Committee noted general support for the utilization of native tree species. They provided specific comments about three of the proposed species. They noted that the

California sycamore and California bay could struggle to perform well on this high, south-facing hillslope. They additionally remarked that the western redbud was more of a shrub than a tree, commenting that substituting that species with blue elderberry would be more appropriate.

During discussion of the mitigation, the Committee expressed a desire to increase the tree count to the greatest extent feasible while still being cognizant of project goals and site constraints. As heard during the presentation, there are areas that are not suitable for tree planting. Additionally, high fire hazard zones dictate the density of plantings. Despite the limitations, the project team showed a willingness to try and increase the tree count to further offset the loss of the existing trees. The Committee further commented that increasing the number of oaks on site would be beneficial.

The Committee recommends (5/0) that the Commission approve the removals as proposed on the condition that 75 trees be planted on site and that the landscape plan be modified to reflect the removal of *Cercis occidentalis*, western redbud, *Platanus racemosa*, California sycamore, and *Umbellularia California*, California bay from the species pallet and include, *Populus fremontii*, Fremont cottonwood, and *Sambucus mexicana*, blue elderberry.

B. Conditionally approve the following setback tree removal requests:

1. 1211 Plaza Del Monte – *Pinus halepensis*, Aleppo pine – Chris Guillen

The Committee reviewed the Aleppo pine, and the supplemental arborist report provided by the applicant. They evaluated the reasons the applicant listed in the application to support removal, which included the issues highlighted in the arborist report and safety concerns. The Committee commented that the tree was in fair health but noted decline present throughout the lower portion of the canopy.

The Committee discussed the findings in the report, which stated that the tree had a fungal infection that would lead to continued decline of the tree's canopy, moderate structural issues, and limited long-term management options to improve the tree's condition. The Committee discussed the documented issues at length on-site while viewing the tree. There was a majority consensus amongst the members supporting the recommendation in the arborist report that removal and replanting with a new tree species made practical sense. the tree and replant with a new species.

Concerning mitigation, the Committee discussed suitable replacement sizes to offset the loss of the tree. After review, the Committee concluded that a replacement tree capable of reaching 35 feet in height at maturity would be an adequate replacement for the property.

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 (4/1) that the Commission approve the removal on the condition the applicant plant a canopy tree that can achieve 35 feet in height at maturity.

2. 227 Constance Lane – *Washingtonia robusta*, Mexican fan palm – Holly Ricklefs

The Committee evaluated the tree, noting it was in good health overall. The Committee also evaluated the reasons listed on the application for removal, which included the tree being out of scale for the landscape and it being in direct conflict with another neighboring tree. The Committee reviewed the concerns, remarking that the tree, as pointed out in the application, was growing very close to a neighboring jacaranda and likely negatively impacting it.

The Committee discussed the value of the palm versus the negative impact it was having on the jacaranda. There was agreement among the members that the palm was negatively impacting the jacaranda by suppressing its growth and limiting sunlight, since the palm was located south of the jacaranda's canopy.

After discussion and review, the Committee determined the canopy tree provided more benefits than the palm and that removal of the palm would further support long-term success of the jacaranda.

The Committee conferred regarding replacement of the removed palm and ultimately determined that planting a new tree would be beneficial. The Committee recommended planting a species capable of reaching at least 30 feet in height at maturity.

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 (5/0) that the Commission approve the removal on the condition the applicant plant a canopy tree that can achieve 30 feet in height at maturity.

3. 527 N. La Cumbre Road – *Populus nigra 'Italica'*, Lombardy poplar – Dave Menzies, El Paraiso HOA

The Committee reviewed the Lombardy poplar and noted the tree appeared to be in fair health overall. They evaluated the reasons the applicant listed to support the removal of the tree. The listed issues included decline in health, previous limb failures, and the presence of termites. The Committee inspected the trunk for the evidence of termites. Although the inspection did not reveal any real evidence of termite damage, there were significant sections of dead or decaying tissue throughout the main stems

of the tree. Based on the extent of the decay, the Committee recommended removing the tree.

With respect to mitigation, the Committee determined the applicant should plant a new canopy tree capable of reaching 30 feet in height somewhere on the property.

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 (5/0) that the Commission approve the removal on the condition the applicant plant a canopy tree on the property that can achieve 30 feet in height at maturity.

C. Deny the following setback tree removal request:

1. 106 Juana Maria Avenue – *Magnolia grandiflora*, southern magnolia – County Mental Health Association Santa Barbara County

The Committee evaluated the southern magnolia proposed for removal and reviewed the concerns listed on the application to support the removal. The applicant cited issues with the root system impacting both the existing and newly proposed driveway. The applicant also cited damage to a chain-link fence and its footing.

During on-site inspection of the tree, the Committee commented that the tree was in good health and a nice specimen of the species. The Committee discussed the listed concerns noting that root pruning would allow for replacement of the driveway without the need for tree removal. The Committee further noted that alternative strategies such as meandering the fence or leaving a cutout around the tree would allow for fence repair without requiring removal.

The Committee recommends (5/0) that the Commission deny the removal.

ATTACHMENTS:

1. 740 Dolores Drive
2. 1211 Plaza Del Monte
3. 227 Constance Lane
4. 527 N. La Cumbre Road
5. 106 Juana Maria Avenue

PREPARED BY: Nathan Slack, Urban Forest Superintendent

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