



Public Comment Received for: General Public Comment

Name of Sender	Distributed prior to hearing	Distributed during the hearing	Distributed after the hearing
1. Rick Closson	x		
2. Cheri Rae			x

From: [Richard Closson](#)
To: [Community Development HLCsecretary](#)
Subject: Historic Landmarks Commission, April 10, 2024, Item A. Public Comment
Date: Monday, April 8, 2024 9:21:07 PM

Dear Commissioners,

These general public comments concern an item not on your agenda, but one that should always be on your minds: decisions you make are too often ignored by staff members and not enforced by other City departments. The Commission's (and City Council's) expectations were not met in 1997 after six blocks of trees on East Anapamu Street were landmarked. The Commission's recommendations for tree care in 2013 were ignored entirely. The Commission does good work, but should not allow its efforts and decisions to be ignored. As a sorry example, I give you below the submitted text of my Opinion printed online (April 5) by the [Santa Barbara Independent](#) concerning the deterioration of the landmarked Italian stone pines, officially the "Doremus Pine Trees."

Opinion > Voices

"With the recent rainstorm, we had the sad reminder of the inadequate care and protection the Italian Stone Pine trees along the 300-800 blocks of East Anapamu Street have received since the City Council bestowed landmark status on them in 1997. Two trees have fallen and are now removed.

"All designated landmarks in Santa Barbara are important to the historic fabric of our City and are protected from deterioration and destruction by the Municipal Code with substantial penalties for violations. Through the years, City Councils have expected special care and preservation for things they have designated to receive our highest level of protection. The tale of the landmarked "Doremus Pine Trees" is in sharp contrast to that expectation.

"In 1997 when these trees were landmarked, there were 79 of them. During late 2013, the character-defining canopy was in jeopardy with four trees dead and another dozen identified by the City's arborist to be in poor health. More have been lost and replaced since then; still their number was just 57 before these latest two fell. In September 2013, the Department of Parks and Recreation made an embarrassing and defensive presentation to the Historic Landmark Commission (HLC), trying to explain why these historic landmarks continued to suffer.

"The HLC was not happy, and dismissed the proffered "bark beetles" as an excuse secondary to the trees being stressed from inadequate care. The Commission requested 1) more watering for the trees and enlistment of neighbors to participate, 2) consider permeable street paving and other storm water management efforts, 3) notification to the public and HLC whenever a landmark tree required removal, and 4) development of a program to prevent continued tree loss. Despite vocal staff promises and the following year's new Urban Forest Management Plan, none of HLC's recommendations have been implemented.

"The Department of Parks and Recreation's current thinking is that Italian Stone Pines will never thrive in an urban environment (just ignore those flourishing stands on North Quarantina Street here, and along South H Street in Lompoc). Despite the Parks

Commission's 1982 designation of them to be the required street tree on these blocks of East Anapamu Street, they may be allowed to die and be replaced by a more "suitable" species.

"With the loss of the latest two trees, the remaining count will be 55, less than 70% of the original landmarked number even including later replacements. What argument might persuade the Council, the Landmarks Commission, or not least, the citizens of Santa Barbara that losing almost one-third of a landmark is acceptable? Would the loss of other City-owned landmarks be easily waved away? Would landmarked buildings like City Hall, the Recreation Center, the County Courthouse (currently being repaired), or the Central Library (currently being renovated) be allowed to crumble? Of course not!

"It's a shell-game where the magician says, *"We are a celebrated Tree City USA! We are planting so many trees on Arbor Day this year!"* But don't watch what's actually happening: Trees designated for the City's highest protection are dying every year, and many times not being replaced. Of course, there are always reasons, excuses. *"Not my fault. Look over there! OMG! Bark beetles!"*

"The City Council designated another stretch of cultural landscape in 2022, the 6-block State Street Parkway with specific Pindo Palms. Will we simply shrug in the future if those trees falter under continued City care? I hope not. While we have only a few City examples, landmarked trees are acknowledged and officially designated as "special." They cannot be considered as routine street trees and afforded only the usual care. They are landmarks! Treat them as such.

"The City must protect living landmarks as they do built landmarks. There are ways – perhaps heroic and expensive ways – to do that. Or must we accept the former are not "true" landmarks that contribute to the historic ambience of Santa Barbara or that make it a desirable place to live?"

Please demand that Commission staff make room on a near future agenda for a full report from the Department of Parks and Recreation about the current condition and future plan of care for the trees. Please also allow members of the public to participate fully in the discussion at the dais, not limited to 2 minute bites at the podium microphone.

Regards,
Rick Closson
3308 Calle Fresno ([Google Map](#))
Santa Barbara, CA 93105-2605
Cell (voice & text) 805.202.6535

Public Comment #2

From: [Cheri Rae](#)
To: [Community Development HLCsecretary](#)
Subject: Comments for the Record
Date: Wednesday, April 10, 2024 11:43:39 PM

Good afternoon, Commissioners.

My name is Cheri Rae.

I was last here in December, asking for a plan to address the complex issue of protecting a City Historic Landmark, the five-block stand of Italian Stone Pines on Anapamu Street. Since then, we have lost two more of them: Massive trees that fell in the rain, crushing cars and taking out utility lines, but mercifully, sparing any injuries or worse. Ironically these trees fell just a few days after meeting with the Urban Historian and the City Arborist on March 25, and we had actually discussed the possibility of more losses of the trees in the upcoming storm.

Although we are accustomed to *reacting* each time one of these trees falls, it's time for greater *proactivity* when it comes to this historic resource.

Since the release of my recent biography about Pearl Chase, I have often asked been asked, "What would Pearl Chase do?" about various situations and issues in this town. We already know that she cared greatly about those iconic trees, as I point out in an anecdote in my book that is included in the extensive citizens' report we have researched, compiled, and provided for you. She made it her business to speak out for them. As good stewards, it is left to us to do the same.

With her Three C's of Communicate, Coordinate and Cooperate, she would surely urge you to prioritize these trees that formed a much-revered canopy that she so enjoyed. No doubt she would request this body to direct staff to take a multi-departmental approach to evaluate the health and care of these iconic trees for historic preservation as well as the health and safety of the community. And she would expect the creation and implementation of a timely plan that makes sense.

She would likely pose multiple questions:

Can cuttings be taken from these historic trees to perpetuate them in a more favorable environment?

Does this significant historic stand qualify for protection from the California Office of Historic Preservation?

If these historic trees can no longer flourish in this environment, what is to be done? What is the value? The specific trees? Replacement with the same species or with another species more suited for the environment? Maintenance of the beloved canopy?

Where is the information about these living historic landmarks on the city's website? Where is the signage of—not just this stand but the other landmarked trees around town? For example, no one would ever know the historic landmark status of the remarkable eucalyptus near Smart & Final. Nor would they have any clue of the significance of the stand of Italian Stone Pines on Anapamu and their proximity to the former Doremus estate at the corner of Anapamu and Salsipuedes streets. At the very least, these historic landmark trees should have their own pages on the city website, complete with photos and interpretive history, far more than the out-of-date pdf listing that is now found online.

Much discussion about these trees must take place, followed up by appropriate action. It was in 2013 when Kellam de Forest and I raised these same issues, and then commissioner Don Sharpe expressed his concerns. We were told the adoption of the Urban Forest Management Plan would address our concerns about these trees. That was in 2014. They're both gone now, and I feel a need to continue to speak out for those good stewards, and like the Lorax, speak for the trees.