



CITY OF SANTA BARBARA
PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION REPORT

AGENDA DATE: March 27, 2024

TO: Parks and Recreation Commission

FROM: Parks Division, Parks and Recreation Department

SUBJECT: Street Tree Advisory Committee Recommendations

RECOMMENDATION: That the Commission:

A. Deny the following setback tree removal requests:

1. 335 Rosario Drive – *Ulmus parvifolia*, Chinese Elm – Karen Christman, Arbor Services, Inc.

The Committee reviewed the Chinese Elm proposed for removal, noting the tree was in fair health overall. They discussed the issues listed on the application for removal, which included concerns related to previous limb failures, maintenance requirements, and potential future limb failures. The Committee noted that there were sections of the canopy that were over-extended in length, commenting that pruning of the outer perimeter of the canopy and reducing branch length would reduce the potential for limb failure. Additional discussion took place about the tree and whether a finding could support its removal. They determined that at this time no finding supported removal, commenting that pruning would improve the tree's overall condition.

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

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

2. 138 Santa Rosa Place – *Washingtonia robusta*, Mexican Fan Palm – Mary Jean Headlee

The Committee reviewed the Mexican Fan Palm proposed for removal noting it was in good health. They reviewed the reasons listed on the application for removal, which included maintenance and safety concerns from falling palm fronds and a need to prune the tree frequently to avoid having fronds falling from the tree. The Committee discussed the palm and its maintenance needs. After review, there was consensus amongst the members that at this time the palm was still functional in the landscape and did not warrant removal.

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

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

3. 412 Dibblee Avenue – *Araucaria heterophylla*, Norfolk Island Pine – Ken Davenport

The Committee evaluated the Norfolk Island Pine commenting that the tree was in great health and a particularly nice specimen. They reviewed the reasons listed for removal on the application, which included concerns with limb and/or tree failure and possible structural damage to the eve of the home and the foundation. The Committee evaluated each of the concerns listed, noting that this species of tree is not very problematic and with routine maintenance fear of limb and tree failure remains very low. Despite the trunk of the tree being close to the eve, members remarked that it was unlikely to cause damage at any point in the future. Lastly, given that there was no verified damage to the foundation of the home they concluded it was unlikely to be occurring.

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

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

B. Conditionally approve the following street tree removal request:

1. De La Guerra Plaza and front of City Hall – (49) various trees – Brad Hess, Public Works

Tree numbers referenced below are located on landscape plan sheets – TP100 and TP101 in the supplemental attachments to this report.

Due to the large scale of the project, the Committee evaluated the project in three sections, which included the Storke Placita area, the area containing De La Guerra Plaza, the News Press building, including the improvements planned for De La Guerra, and lastly the front of City Hall.

During review of the Storke Placita area, there was consensus amongst the members that the proposed removals in this area made practical sense. Members did note that the large Windmill Palm, tree #46, located in Storke Placita was a particularly nice specimen, expressing a desire to see the palm relocated.

During review of the area that includes De La Guerra Plaza, De La Guerra Street improvements, and in front of the News Press Building, the Committee commented that the proposed tree removals also made practical sense.

They expressed concern for the removal of the large Nile Tulip Tree, tree #18. The applicant explained the intent and rationale for the location of the pavilion, which was in direct conflict with the Nile Tulip Tree. The Committee commented that it would be nice to try and incorporate the Nile Tulip Tree into the new design due to the loss of the existing tree. The project applicant and designer discussed this with the Committee and suggested planting Nile Tulip Tree on the side of the main entrance to City Hall in lieu of the proposed Western Redbud. The Committee agreed that this was a great idea.

Additionally, members commented that the proposal to relocate the large California Fan Palm, tree #4, from the plaza to the front of City Hall was questionable given the palm's age and health. They commented that given the significant cost to move the palm, it made sense to look for a smaller specimen California Fan Palm to plant in front of City Hall. They commented that a new palm would have a much greater chance of survival while still honoring the historical nature of the use of these palms in De La Guerra Plaza.

The Committee also remarked that the existing Olive Tree, tree #20, proposed for removal was a nice specimen. The project applicant explained that the tree is causing damage to the existing historic adobe wall. Members commented that it may be possible to cut the base of the Olive Tree, which could eliminate any further damage to the historic wall and preserve the tree. The project applicant agreed to explore this as an option, working in conjunction with the City Arborist.

As the Committee viewed the proposed improvements in front of City Hall, they expressed a desire to preserve the two Houpara that framed the main entrance to City Hall, trees #27 & 28. Additionally, they expressed concern for the proposal to install a plaza near the trees proposed for retention, noting that removing soil from this area would lead to root pruning, jeopardizing the health of the trees. The applicant and designer stated that it was possible to increase the proposed grade for the plaza, which would eliminate the need to reduce the soil level in this area.

The Committee recommends (5/0) that the Commission approve the proposed removals, on the conditions:

- Preserve and transplant tree #46, *Trachycarpus fortunei*, Windmill Palm, to an offsite location to be determined by the City Arborist.
- Modify the landscape plan to reflect the planting of two *Markhamia lutea*, Nile Tulip Trees, on the side of City Hall, in place of the three proposed Western Redbuds.

ATTACHMENTS:

1. 335 Rosario Drive
2. 138 Santa Rosa Place
3. 412 Dibblee Avenue
4. De La Guerra Plaza and front of City Hall

PREPARED BY: Nathan Slack, Urban Forest Superintendent

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