Mountain View Coalition for Sustainable Planning
c/o Aaron Grossman
817 Montgomery Street
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April 27, 2026

City of Mountain View City Council
City Hall, 500 Castro Street
PO Box 7540
Mountain View, CA 94039-7540

Re: Biodiversity & Urban Forest Plan Study Session

Dear Mayor Ramos and City Council Members,

We are submitting this letter after discussions with members from the Mountain View Coalition for Sustainable Planning (MVCSP), GreenSpacesMV, Canopy, and the Silicon Valley Bicycle Coalition local team for Mountain View.

The Mountain View Biodiversity & Urban Forest Plan (BUFP) contains a strong vision for biodiversity, urban canopy, climate resilience, and ecological health. However, many of the proposed actions remain broad and aspirational, relying heavily on policy direction and high-level goals without establishing sufficiently clear implementation and accountability mechanisms, operational standards, and integration into transportation, stormwater, parks, and public realm project delivery processes.

One example of this broader implementation gap is the Plan's approach to shade and thermal comfort. While "Connecting People and Nature" is identified as one of the four core goals of the BUFP, Action 17 establishes measurable shade canopy targets for parking lots, but does not establish comparable expectations for sidewalks, bikeways, transit stops, or other public spaces where people spend time outdoors.

These concerns were also previously raised in the Draft Biodiversity & Urban Forest (November 2025) Comment Letter from GreenSpacesMV in the section titled “Implementation and Accountability.” They remain largely unresolved in the current draft BUFP.

Recommended Updates to BUFP Section 5.2: Vision to Action

We’ve identified eight updates to **Section 5.2: Vision to Action** – either rewording existing Actions (4) or adding new Actions (4). These are provided in detail in **Appendix A**.

Highest Priority Updates

Given the implementation gaps identified above — particularly related to “Connecting People and Nature” — we would like to call out and particularly encourage Council to prioritize the following three updates:

- **Action 1 (Green Infrastructure Integration in Transportation Projects)**
- **Action 17 (Shade Integration and Thermal Comfort)**
- **Action 26 (Standard Details and Specifications Update)**

Together, these updates would help better integrate urban canopy, green infrastructure, shade, and thermal comfort into transportation and public realm project delivery processes, while enabling the long-term implementation of Green Complete Streets and climate resilience goals. Without stronger implementation mechanisms, it will be much more challenging to realize this goal, which the Mountain View Council and community have prioritized since 2020.

Implementation-Oriented Planning Approaches in Peer Cities Plans

We would also like to point out and assure Council and Staff that what we’re asking is not new. Many of our peer cities – including East Palo Alto, Palo Alto, San Jose, Fremont, Emeryville, Oakland, and others – have already been incorporating stronger policies and requirements around implementation, accountability, reporting, standards, and project integration mechanisms in their cities’ Plans, including in Urban Forest Plans and Active Transportation Plans.

Appendix B includes several examples from peer city Urban Forest Plans illustrating that these types of implementation-oriented approaches are increasingly common and not without precedent.

The recommendations below focus primarily on strengthening implementation, transportation integration, thermal comfort, and public realm coordination within the Urban Forestry components of the BUFP.

We also support and refer Council to the joint comment letter submitted by GreenSpacesMV and Santa Clara Valley Bird Alliance (April 25, 2026), which includes additional recommendations related to biodiversity, habitat connectivity, ecology, and conservation.

Thank you,

April Webster
Bruce England
IdaRose Sylvester
Silja Paymer
Tracy Ferea, PhD
Peying Lee
Rashmi Sahai

cc:

John Marchant, Community Services Director
Jennifer Ng, Public Works Director
Allison Boyer, Assistant Public Works Director
Christian Murdock, Community Development Director
Kimbra McCarthy, City Manager
Heather Glaser, City Clerk

About Mountain View Coalition for Sustainable Planning

The Mountain View Coalition for Sustainable Planning is a local volunteer-based organization dedicated to making Mountain View as beautiful, economically healthy, transit, bicycle, and pedestrian accessible, and affordable as possible. MVCSP member interest and expertise covers areas such as housing, transportation, the environment, the economy, and beyond! For more information, see http://www.mvcsp.org.

To contact us, send email to mvcsp.info@gmail.com.

Appendix A: Recommended Updates to Actions in Section 5.2

1. Action 1 (Green Infrastructure Integration in Transportation Projects)

Proposed Revision

Require transportation, active transportation projects (bikeways and sidewalks), resurfacing, drainage, and public realm projects to evaluate opportunities to integrate street trees and green stormwater infrastructure (GSI) during project planning, design, and implementation. This should include consideration of opportunities to support flooding reduction, urban heat island mitigation, pavement lifespan extension, natural shade, thermal comfort, and broader climate resilience goals. Exceptions shall be documented and justified in project records and approved by the Chief Transportation Officer, with significant tradeoffs disclosed in Council reports for major capital and public realm projects.

***Current language**: "Seek to strategically include green features in active transportation improvement project design to both increase ecological value and achieve other City priorities."*

2. Action 12 (Public Tree Planting and Canopy Retention)

Proposed Revision

Plant an additional 1,575 public trees by 2030, not including replacement trees planted for trees removed through development, with planting prioritized in low-canopy and disadvantaged areas, active transportation corridors, parks, and climate-vulnerable locations. Prioritize retention of mature trees and existing canopy within capital and transportation projects where feasible to preserve shade, biodiversity, stormwater, and thermal comfort benefits.

***Current language**: "Plant an additional 1,575 public trees by 2030."*

3. Action 17 (Shade Integration and Thermal Comfort)

Proposed Revision

Integrate natural shade improvements and address shade gaps along active transportation corridors in order to improve thermal comfort, walkability, and bicycle comfort, particularly within disadvantaged and low-canopy communities. Annual tracking and reporting on shade coverage along active transportation corridors shall be conducted using a defined methodology, including corridor shade coverage, net change over time, and shade conditions within disadvantaged and low-canopy communities. Reporting shall be provided annually to Council and made publicly available on the City website.

***Current language**: "Prioritize shade tree planting in the Cooling Zone, mapped in Guide A: Urban Landscaping, to protect against heat and improve walkability."*

4. Action 21 (Staff Training for Green Streets and Biodiversity Practices)

Proposed Revision

Develop and implement staff training supporting biodiversity-friendly landscape management, green stormwater infrastructure (GSI) planting and maintenance requirements, and green streets and Complete Streets practices across City departments, including consideration of applicable guidance such as the Chapter 8.0: Green Streets in the California Complete Streets Design Guidance (DIB-94), lessons from the 2024 MTC Green Streets Technical Workshop (Santa Clara County), and strong examples like Emeryville's. Training shall support urban canopy, climate resilience, stormwater management, and active transportation objectives within public projects, operations, and maintenance practices.

Current language: *"Develop and implement staff training for biodiversity-friendly landscape and maintenance."*

5. Action 26 (Standard Details and Specifications Update) – in Goal 3C

New Action

Update Standard Construction Details and related specifications to operationalize urban forest, climate resilience, and active transportation goals within transportation, capital, and public realm projects. Updates shall include revision of Standard Detail A-22 to incorporate context-sensitive sight triangle guidance informed by the analysis in the Mountain View Active Transportation Plan Existing Conditions and Needs Summary (October 2023 Draft), as well as updated street tree planting details supporting adequate soil volume, tree spacing, natural shade coverage, healthy long-term canopy growth, habitat value, and native and biodiversity-supporting plantings. Staff should also review relevant peer city examples, including integrated Green Streets standard details and specifications used in cities such as Emeryville.

6. Action 27 (Integrated Pest Management and Chemical Reduction) – in Goal 2A

New Action

Phase out conventional pesticides and herbicides, and synthetic fertilizers in all City operations, landscaping, and public realm maintenance practices through implementation of Integrated Pest Management (IPM), native and climate-resilient planting, and biodiversity-supporting landscape management. Staff shall provide annual reporting to Council on implementation progress related to biodiversity-supporting landscape management practices, including reductions in pesticide and herbicide use, acreage managed under Integrated Pest Management (IPM) practices, and related operational changes where applicable. The City should also consider public education and outreach related to IPM and biodiversity-friendly landscaping practices, particularly since much pesticide and herbicide use occurs on private property. Staff should also evaluate whether updates to the City's existing Integrated Pest Management (IPM) policies, procedures, and educational materials are needed to support biodiversity, climate resilience, and ecological landscaping goals.

7. Action 28 (Native Species Integration and Reporting) – in Goal 2A

New Action

Native species shall be prioritized in public projects that include trees, landscaping, or planting improvements within transportation, parks, green stormwater infrastructure (GSI), and public realm projects. Exceptions shall be documented and justified in project records and disclosed in Council reports for major capital and public realm projects. Track native planting incorporated into public projects, including overall coverage and net change over time, and provide annual biodiversity implementation reporting to Council, with reporting made publicly available on the City website.

8. Action 29 (Cross-Plan Implementation and Coordination) – in Goal 4C

New Action

Establish clear implementation mechanisms between the Active Transportation Plan (ATP), Biodiversity & Urban Forest Plan (BUFP), and Parks & Recreation Strategic Plan (PRSP). The plans shall identify coordinated policies, design standards, funding pathways, implementation processes, performance metrics, and reporting mechanisms supporting canopy, shade, green infrastructure, habitat connectivity, and thermal comfort improvements within transportation, parks, stormwater, and public realm projects.

The City should also consider designating a lead coordinator or facilitator to support cross-department implementation and alignment across the ATP, BUFP, and PRSP, particularly for Green Complete Streets, ecological connectivity, climate resilience, and related public realm initiatives.

Appendix B: Peer City Examples of Implementation-Oriented Recommendations

Implementation-oriented language related to reporting, project integration, accountability, standards, and exception documentation is increasingly common in transportation, climate resilience, and urban forest planning documents.

Palo Alto's Urban Forest Master Plan, 2nd Edition (2019)

Palo Alto's Urban Forest Master Plan provides an example of an urban forest plan that extends beyond canopy goals and tree planting to include operational guidance related to standards, development review, stormwater integration, interdepartmental coordination, monitoring, staffing, training, and long-term implementation. The plan explicitly connects urban forestry objectives to technical manuals, Standard Details, capital projects, sustainability planning, and ecological performance outcomes.

Some selected examples of programs (similar to our actions) from Palo Alto's Urban Forest Master Plan for comparison:

- **Program 5.B.x. (Page 147):** Incorporate stormwater treatment and bioretention best management practices into the *Tree & Landscape Technical Manual*, Standard Conditions of Approval, and **Standard Details**, and citywide *Sustainability Plan*. Include best practices and other requirements from both Municipal and Regional Permits and emphasize the advantages (or disadvantages) of:
    - Planting trees, shrubs, and ground cover to provide an understory and a more complex habitat for birds in private and public landscaping.
    - Planting less drought resistant species (e.g., native riparian species that provide habitat), where there is a natural water source such as a creek or higher water table level—to help provide diversity.
    - Planting larger broadleaf trees where there are no overhead wires—to help provide ecological benefits.
    - Planting introduced climate adaptive trees in areas that are ideal for bioretention of stormwater.
    - Rain gardens and use of condensation water from air-conditioning units to provide water for "thirsty" habitat trees such as willows, sycamores and cottonwoods

- **Program 5.B.xvi**. **(Page 148):** Provide opportunities for training Urban Forest staff and park rangers that include:
    - Certification as arborist.
    - Certification in pesticide application.
    - Education in Integrated Pest Management.
    - Education in Best Management Practices for management of invasive plants.
    - Education in ecology and native plant management.
    - Proficiency in relevant software programs.
    - Tree Risk Management Protocols. Review should include exploration of conferences, in-house training, online training, etc.

Fremont Urban Forest Management Plan (2023)

Fremont's **Urban Forest Management Plan (UFMP)** provides an example of an urban forest plan that moves beyond canopy goals and tree planting to address long-term implementation, operations, coordination, and resilience. The Plan frames the urban forest as integrated green infrastructure connected to climate adaptation, environmental justice, public health, and broader City systems. It also explicitly discusses the need to align standards, procedures, staffing, training, funding, and long-term maintenance practices to support canopy equity, climate resilience, and sustainable urban forest performance over time.

Several aspects of Fremont's framework are particularly relevant to Mountain View because many of the outcomes discussed in the BUFP — including canopy expansion, biodiversity, shade, thermal comfort, green streets, and climate resilience — ultimately depend on whether goals are translated into the standards, details, specifications, project delivery processes, maintenance practices, and reporting systems staff use day-to-day.

Some selected examples of implementation-oriented actions from Fremont's Plan include:

- **A2c** Update City resources with references and information relating to industry standards and best practices. Utilize ANSI A300, ANSI Z133.1-2012, and ISA BMPs for guidance.
- **A1g** Analyze changes to the public tree population by evaluating the inventory in terms of tree structure, characteristics, trends, and ecosystem benefits to inform maintenance, management, and outreach approaches.

Fremont also paired the Urban Forest Management Plan with a dedicated **Implementation and Monitoring Plan** that establishes implementation schedules, monitoring processes, benchmark metrics, interdepartmental coordination structures, and adaptive management mechanisms. The Plan specifically recommends establishing "an **urban forestry working group** to manage Plan implementation and monitoring."

The implementation framework includes:

- implementation schedules and target years
- lead departments and collaborators
- ongoing monitoring and evaluation processes
- benchmark canopy and equity metrics
- staffing and training considerations
- implementation tracking tied to goals and actions
- annual and ongoing reporting frameworks
- coordination structures, including an urban forestry working group
- continuous improvement and adaptive management processes
- integration with broader City policies and General Plan goals

The **Implementation & Monitoring Plan** also establishes baseline benchmark values and operational performance indicators used to measure progress over time. In many ways, it functions as an ongoing implementation “report card” tied to canopy goals, equity metrics, staffing levels, maintenance activities, budget allocations, management capacity, and public perception of the urban forest.

Primary Urban Forest Benchmark Values to Measure Plan Progress

Table 5. Fremont's primary urban forest benchmark values to measure Plan progress

URBAN TREE CANOPY (UTC) COVER (2020)	
Tree Equity Score (2021)	72 out of 100
UTC	14.4% (urbanized area)
Short-term Canopy Goal	2032: 0.6% increase
Long-term Canopy Goals	2042: 1.2% increase
	2052: 2.2% increase
	2062: 5.5% increase
City-led Tree Plantings to Reach Goals	50% of total trees required
PUBLIC TREE COUNTS (2021)	
City-Maintained Street Trees	8,600
Trees in Maintained Areas of Parks	8,673
Total City-Maintained Public Trees	17,273
Total Public Trees (inventoried)	22,169
Privately-Maintained Street Trees	55,218
All Public Street/Park/Median/Backup Lot Trees	77,387
Open Space and Natural Areas Trees (est.)	~480,000
Total Public Trees (est.)	557,387
TREE BENEFITS	
Citywide (UTC Assessment)	2020: $44 million (total)
Inventoried Public Trees	2021: $6.9 million (annual)
Inventoried Public Trees Estimated Dollar Value	2021: $492 million
Cost : Benefit of Public Trees	1:7.44 → for every $1 spent, $7.44 return
TREE AND BUDGET DISTRIBUTION (FY 2022-2023)	
Public Trees (street and park) per Capita	0.34 (2021 human population)
Budget per Capita, Budget per Public Tree (street/park)	$7.42, $21.80
Urban Forestry Program FTEs	8.00
Total Public Trees per Staff	9,700 trees for every 1 FTE
MANAGEMENT ACTIVITIES (2021)	
Public Trees Pruned (street and park)	2,140
Public Trees Removed	874
Public Trees Planted	1,961
Permits Received, Trees Inspected	857 permits, 1,018 trees inspected
Number of Volunteers and/or Hours	1,123 hours
URBAN FOREST AUDIT SYSTEM (TOTAL SCORE OF 2021): 70%	
Management Policy and Ordinances	79%
Professional Capacity and Training	81%
Funding and Accounting	67%
Decision and Management Authority	75%
Inventories	73%
Urban Forest Management Plans	50%
Risk Management	67%
Disaster Planning	79%
Standards and Best Management Practices	65%
Community	82%
Green Asset Evaluation	70%
PUBLIC PERCEPTION (2021)	
Health of the urban forest in the past 10 years	34% feel the health has declined
Management of the urban forest in the past 10 years	40% feel public trees are managed fairly
Amount of urban tree canopy cover	86% support increasing canopy cover