



Dear Parks and Recreation Commissioners,

GreenSpacesMV and the Santa Clara Valley Bird Alliance would like to share our thoughts on the proposed heritage tree mitigation for Public Safety Building (Project 20-49). We believe this project is especially important because the approach it takes on tree selection and biodiversity will set an example for all future development. We appreciate that the updated mitigation plan has increased the number of native trees from 9 to 51. This is a great improvement for the biodiversity potential of the site, as only native plants have co-evolved relationships with the native insects that form the base of the food web for birds and other wildlife. We also appreciate that non-native species are no longer designated as “semi-native”. However, 67—more than half—of the 118 mitigation trees are not native. In response, we have some questions on what drove the selection of these species and some suggestions on how to increase the number of native trees selected.

Why Regal Prince Oaks?

The City proposes to plant 29 non-native Regal Prince Oaks, citing the “City’s preference for oaks” as the reason. We were not aware that the City had a preference for oaks, especially non-native oak species that provide lower biodiversity benefits than native trees. The rationale also states that the compact, columnar growth pattern will allow more trees to fit within the project’s boundary. It sounds like the Regal Prince Oaks are being selected to provide a hedge, as opposed to canopy. More trees doesn’t necessarily mean greater benefits. From both shade and biodiversity perspectives, canopy cover is a more important metric than the number of trees planted. Instead of the Regal Prince Oaks, we recommend selecting native oaks or other native species, even if this means planting fewer on site because they need more space to thrive. Specifically, Valley Oaks could be planted at the entrance corner of the new building and to provide shade over the ground-level parking lots. If a hedge is desired, native Toyons may be able to fill that niche. If 118 trees don’t fit within the project boundary, planting some of the replacement trees in the surrounding neighborhood seems like a reasonable option to us.

Why only three species of natives?

We are interested in learning why only three species of native trees are being proposed. Are other species not readily available in a 24-inch box size? If that is the case, can native 15-gallon trees be

used if they are readily available or can the City perhaps have more species contract-grown in preparation for this project? California has almost 200 species of native trees. Looking for the right tree for the space, while supporting our community's biodiversity goals, should be possible with such a wide range of options.

We would also like to express our concern for the timeline of the tree removals. According to the information shared at the PRC meeting on March 17, 2026, all trees will be removed during Phase 1 of the project. However, some of these trees are currently growing on the site of the future parking garage and shooting range, which has yet to be funded. We urge the City to preserve the trees growing on this site until construction of this portion of the project begins. We also seek clarity on when the mitigation trees will be planted. The memo states that "all trees will be installed by the last phase of the project". Does that mean that trees will not be planted until the parking garage and shooting range are complete? Since funding for the third phase of the project is still uncertain, we encourage mitigation trees not located close to the new parking garage to be planted at the end of phase two.

The tree mitigation proposal does not include a plan for or monitoring the health and survival of the trees after they are planted. A commitment to monitoring the trees and replacing any that die is an important part of ensuring that the 27.5% canopy cover cited in the proposal is achieved.

Lastly, we encourage the City to also choose native species for the other landscaping features of the project. Native understory plants are a key component of a healthy ecosystem, equally important in promoting biodiversity as native trees. Although not the focus for discussion at the May 13th PRC meeting, we want to make this point to ensure that all plantings fulfill the commitments set forth in Mountain View's Biodiversity and Urban Forest Plan, contributing to a community where people and nature thrive together.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,
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About GreenSpacesMV

GreenSpacesMV is made up of volunteer members who are primarily residents of Mountain View and are, therefore, direct stakeholders affected by what happens in our city. Our focus is on biodiversity, native, drought-tolerant, and pollinator-friendly landscaping, green complete streets, parks and other open spaces, including privately owned, publicly accessible (or POPA) park spaces, and so on. For more information, see <https://www.facebook.com/GreenSpacesMV>. To contact us, send email to GreenSpacesMV.info@gmail.com.

About the Santa Clara Valley Bird Alliance

The Santa Clara Valley Bird Alliance (SCVBA) promotes the enjoyment, understanding, and protection of birds and other wildlife by engaging people of all ages in birding, education, and conservation. SCVBA was founded as the Santa Clara Valley Audubon Society in 1925, and with over 1,000 members, is one of the largest National Audubon Society chapters in California. For more information, visit scvbirdalliance.org.