

Protest

PLN2015-00496

Tree Removal Project at 799 Berkeley Avenue, Menlo Park – Parcel # 062160570

This Tree Removal Permit application concerns 5 Trees: a pine tree next to the driveway for 799 Berkeley where the driveway meets the street; a birch tree in the middle of the property; and a Community of 3 Redwoods along the right property boundary with 815 and 821 Berkeley Avenue.

We are protesting the Tree Removal Application specifically for the Community of 3 Redwoods. What is not shown in the application is that this is a Community of 3 Redwoods growing in a row, with approximately 6 feet between each one. They are more than 40 feet high. Unlike many Significant Redwoods in San Mateo County, these 3 trees are very healthy and appear to be thriving in the midst of the drought.

We recommend preserving and protecting these Redwoods for the following reasons:

1. The furthest east Redwood tree in this Community is growing within 10 feet of the property boundary with the neighbors, thereby existing within the building code-mandated side set back of 10 feet. Our understanding is that no building can be erected where this Redwood grows today.
2. In fact, the proposed building plan for this Parcel A that is on file with the county shows that 2 out of the 3 Redwoods are not covered by the conceptual house plan. However, the plan shows that all 3 will be removed because they are at the outermost edge of a proposed driveway into the garage. It would appear that with a little creativity regarding the driveway – at least one or two of the Redwoods could remain in place. Thus, although it might be inconvenient for the developer to protect these Redwoods during site demolition and build-out, this Community of Significant Redwood trees is not preventing the developer from realizing value from the parcel.
3. In addition, these Redwoods form a privacy screen with the neighbors on that side of the property. As this lot is subdivided and new larger 2-story dwellings are built, it is important to not degrade the outlook for the neighbors who purchased their properties with the expectation of living in the semi-rural neighborhood of Menlo Oaks with an abundance of aesthetically-pleasing trees to look at – not walls of construction and glass. These Redwoods are also on the side of the property towards the 101 freeway, thus also forming a noise and particulate barrier for existing neighbors on the other side of the property – as well as the new property owners to come at 799 Berkeley.
4. These 3 Redwoods are also within an estimated 25 feet of a significant Live Oak tree on the neighbor's side of the property boundary on that side of the 799 Berkeley lot. The tops of these 3 Redwoods are intertwined with the canopy of this Live Oak – so that removing all 3 Redwoods may compromise the health of this significant Live Oak tree. This neighboring Live Oak also provides the same environmental and aesthetic benefits – and should also be protected during the demolition and build-out process by protecting the 3 Redwoods and their root systems.
5. It should also be noted that the paperwork for the 799 Berkeley Subdivision Project request PLN2015-00302 on file with the County Planning Department still states in the "Subdivider

Statement” from Siri Development on the C-1 plan attachment that “No Trees Proposed for Removal with this Application.” However (confusingly), on the C-2 Plan attachment in the same package, there is a statement that several trees will be removed and indicates trees other than the ones requested for removal in this current Tree Removal Permit application PLN2015-00496. While we applaud the described tree protection plan for the Significant Oaks on this property in the latest building plans, it is unclear at this point which documents from the developer can be relied upon, and which significant trees – if any – would be removed from the property – or protected as the project moves forward. Thus it is important to preserve these healthy trees at this stage in the process.

For all of these reasons, we urge the Planning Director to not allow the Community of all 3 Redwood trees to be removed from the property, and request that at least 2 out of these 3 Redwood trees be protected during the demolition and build-out process at 799 Berkeley Avenue.

Respectfully,

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Menlo Park, CA