



March 21, 2016

To: District 6 Councilmember Eric Guerra
District 5 Councilmember Jay Schenirer
District 3 Councilmember Jeff Harris
District 7 Councilmember Richard Jennings III
Sacramento City Hall
915 I Street
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Members of the Sacramento City Council's Law & Legislation Committee:

It was Charles Dickens who once described old elm tree as bent into one another, "like giants who were whispering secrets."¹ This is what comes to mind when picturing Elmhurst's magnificently grand tree canopy.

The historic Elmhurst Neighborhood of Sacramento is defined by US Highway 50 to the north, Stockton Boulevard to the west, 57th Street to the east, and V Street and Second Avenue to the south. The main thoroughfare through Elmhurst is T Street, a charming, beautiful, and functional tree-lined corridor that provides car, bicycle, and pedestrian access. Our neighborhood newsletter is circulated quarterly to approximately 1,300 households. Our neighborhood is known for its large elm, ash, and oak trees that provide a shady canopy for its residents, businesses, and visitors.

Our stunning, leafy neighborhood is home to one of the largest urban elm groves in the U.S. In fact, our historic tree canopy was featured on the recent cover of *Inside Magazine*, which highlights Sacramento's best features. Given the drought, and the last round of revisions presented to the City of Sacramento amending Sacramento City Code sections 2.62.030, 8.04.100, repealing and adding chapter 12.54, and repealing chapters 12.60, 12.64 relating to trees (hereinafter "tree ordinances"), our neighborhood is very concerned about the future of Elmhurst as we know it. It is for that reason our Elmhurst Neighborhood Association (hereinafter "ENA") Board of Directors has voted to oppose the current set of revisions to the tree ordinance, and has committed to working with other neighborhood associations to advocate on behalf of Sacramento's tree canopy. Attached is a January 13, 2016 piece from *The Sacramento Bee* titled "Don't mess around with trees," from earlier this year.

Regarding the revisions, ENA is most concerned about any proposed elimination for protection against Dutch elm disease. Our trees simply cannot withstand such a shift and must be treated, not only for the benefit of any at-risk tree, but for the health of all trees around it. Rather than eliminating protection, we ask that the City consider increasing protection for living trees, and investing in their preservation so that our urban forest is healthy and vibrant.

Regarding the tree removal process, ENA has concerns about the possible use of biased factors such as age and ground space available in favor of tree removal; the absence of any factor that would consider a tree's benefit such as the larger tree canopy, streetscape, scenic view, aesthetics, air quality, and energy reduction; and the absence of an arborist's report showing that structural damage.

Regarding mitigation, ENA is worried that the revisions eliminate the requirement for replacement trees. Furthermore, even if new trees were used to replace historic ones, Elmhurst fear the adverse impact this would have in the short-term, given that new trees would need several decades to grow as large as historic ones to provide the same level of sun protection during scorching hot summers, reduced temperatures, habitat to native and migratory birds along the Pacific Flyway, and scenic view.

Lastly, in terms of fairness, our neighborhood association is alarmed by the fact that there is no requirement that a Hearing Officer be independent, rather than city staff, and a certified arborist. Similarly, we worry that the revisions create neither a clear process nor a meaningful appeals process for residents who disagree with any determination that a tree shall be demolished. Our City of Trees deserves much better.

We share the City of Sacramento's goal to promote a safe, sustainable and healthy urban forest for Sacramento communities, and commend the City's impressive work to maintain an urban forest that provides multiple environmental, economic and aesthetic benefits for residents, businesses and visitors. They improve air and water quality, provide habitat value, attract tourists, businesses and customers, and impart a distinct character to our city. Sacramento is designated as a Sterling Tree City USA and is rated one of the top ten urban forests in the country, and Elmhurst is certainly part of that effort.

For the above reasons, we respectfully request that any decision to remove trees or alter the tree ordinances be made in the context of evaluating the tree canopy in its entirety. For the health of our city and county, impacts must be considered regionally, rather than in isolation. We ask that the Law & Legislation Committee reject any tree ordinance revisions that do not address these concerns. The Elmhurst Neighborhood Association will be meeting with fellow neighborhood associations in the upcoming weeks to discuss this issue, and hope that members of the Law & Legislation Committee will do the same. For questions or concerns, please contact Elmhurst Neighborhood Association Vice President Bonnie Hansen via email at: vintagenouveau@sbcglobal.net.

Sincerely,



Amreet Sandhu, J.D.
President
Elmhurst Neighborhood Association

Attachment

¹ Charles Dickens, David Copperfield (1850).