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OCT 31 2024
Dept of Conservation & Development

October 31, 2024

Dear County Planning Department,

We are writing to formally appeal the tentative approval of tree permit County File CDTP24-00056 and express our strong opposition to the proposed removal of four code-protected trees at 15 Morningside Place. This appeal addresses concerns related to Tree Protection/Preservation (Section 816-6) and Heritage Tree Preservation (Section 816-4) of the county code.

The request to remove three valley oak trees and one California bay tree, with trunk diameters ranging from 9 to 40 inches, for the installation of a pavilion, pool, and pickleball court conflicts with the county's established guidelines for protecting our natural heritage and maintaining our urban forest. We urge you to deny this tree removal permit for the following reasons:

1. Preservation of Mature, Native Trees:
   These centuries-old trees are integral to our neighborhood's character and ecosystem. Their mature status provides significant benefits, including superior air purification, carbon sequestration, and habitat for local wildlife. Their loss would be irreplaceable and diminish our community's natural beauty.
2. Threat to Neighboring Trees and Root Systems:
   The proposed removal and construction activities pose a serious risk to the health and stability of neighboring trees, potentially causing a domino effect of tree loss beyond the applicant's property line.
3. Loss of Essential Shade and Climate Benefits:
   These trees provide invaluable shade for energy conservation and play a vital role in reducing the urban heat island effect, improving air quality, and supporting local biodiversity.
4. Root Zone Protection (how it affects trees on our property):
   The critical root zone extends approximately 1/3 further than the dripline. Any disturbance within this area can severely impact the tree's health and stability.
5. Construction and Landscaping Impacts (how it affects trees on our property):
   Activities such as grading, digging, or trenching within the root zone can cause irreparable damage. The use of fill soils, impermeable materials, or introducing landscaping requiring frequent summer watering can be detrimental to these drought-adapted trees.
6. Community Character and Property Values (how it affects trees on our property):
   The loss of these mature trees could negatively impact property values and irreversibly alter our cherished landscape.

Additional Concerns:

- This removal contradicts our community's commitment to environmental stewardship and sets a dangerous precedent for prioritizing personal recreational facilities over protected, native trees.

We recommend modifying development plans to accommodate these valuable trees by:

- Adjusting building footprints to avoid root zone encroachment
- Using permeable materials for necessary paving
- Implementing protective measures during construction
- Incorporating the trees as natural features in the landscape design

We urge the planning department to prioritize tree preservation and work with developers to balance progress with environmental stewardship. We request a comprehensive review of this permit application, considering the long-term environmental impact and the importance of preserving our community's mature trees.

We are prepared to provide additional information or participate in further discussions as needed. Thank you for your consideration of these crucial points. We look forward to contributing to the decision-making process regarding our community's valuable tree resources.

Sincerely,

Heather and Mark Simone
40 Via Robles
Alamo, CA 94507
Concerned Neighbor and Community Member