

**From:** [Pat Walker](#)  
**To:** [Janneth Lujan](#)  
**Subject:** 383 Arlington Way Tree Removal Permit, PLN2021-0003--Horst SPOKEN PUBLIC COMMENTS FROM PAT WALKER  
**Date:** Tuesday, April 27, 2021 3:47:03 PM

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Dear Ms. Lujan,

Below is a copy of my spoken public comments that I intend to say during tomorrow's Planning Commission Public Hearing, Meeting No. 1704.

Our County's Significant Tree Ordinance states that: "the preservation and replacement of significant tree communities on private and public property is necessary to protect the natural beauty of the area, protect property values, and prevent undesirable changes in the environment".

I would like to address the undesirable changes in our neighborhood that I attribute, at least in part, to the loss of the significant trees that the ordinance was meant to protect.

My husband and I have lived here for 43 years a few doors down the street from the 383 Arlington Way property. We are always watching the birds we see in our yard. I can name some of the bird species that we used to see but now are no longer around, such as quail, great horned owls, and mockingbirds. Now we are noticing that the scrub jays are no longer abundant. We also remember trying to identify various butterflies and moths in our yard, but now we rarely see any. We haven't seen bats for years.

I can't say that the removal of so many mature trees in our neighborhood to make way for larger homes is the reason for the disappearance of wildlife. But, the Significant Tree ordinance does point out that removal of significant trees results in, among other things, "change or elimination of animal habitat, possibly including habitats of endangered species".

What is the point of having a Significant Tree Ordinance if the County approves the removal of any tree that a developer decides should be removed in order to fit within a design of a house? Climate change is rapidly happening, and everyone must do his/her part to address it. Shouldn't a developer also do its part? Doesn't the developer have a responsibility to the neighborhood and to the environment to design a sustainable home and garden? Shouldn't the County do its part? Shouldn't the County exercise its discretion when one of the trees to be removed, a coast live oak #14, is defined by the ordinance as not only significant but also indigenous?

This project is not designed for a known buyer. As such, any potential buyer will have been deprived of the opportunity to have a lovely native oak to enjoy for shade, bird

viewing, and aesthetics. The oak could have been part of the design. Similarly, a potential buyer will not have the opportunity to decide to use the yard for open space for children to play in or for gardening; instead the yard will be paved over for a pool and accessory dwelling unit.

The County should be aware of how important native oaks are for the survival of the bird population because oaks support many species of moths and butterflies needed to produce the caterpillars that birds feed their nestlings.

Finally, in addition to adding value to a property, significant trees, and particularly oaks, reduce noise, absorb rain runoff, and help reduce energy consumption and air pollution. Each time a significant tree is removed in Menlo Oaks, it affects those of us who live nearby.

Thank you.  
Pat Walker



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**From:** [Pat Walker](#)  
**To:** [Janneth Lujan](#)  
**Subject:** FW: Written Comments: Agenda Item No. 1: 383 Arlington Way Tree Removal Permit, PLN2021-0003  
**Date:** Tuesday, April 27, 2021 3:54:38 PM

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Dear Ms. Lujan,

Yesterday I sent my written comments, consisting of links to various articles that I thought were relevant, via an email to the Planning Commission as indicated in the Notice of Public Hearing, not realizing that the written comments should have been sent to you. Just to be sure they are received, they are below.

Thank you,  
Pat Walker

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**From:** Pat Walker [mailto:plwalker@pacbell.net]  
**Sent:** Monday, April 26, 2021 3:47 PM  
**To:** 'planning-commission@smcgov.org'  
**Subject:** Written Comments: Agenda Item No. 1: 383 Arlington Way Tree Removal Permit, PLN2021-0003

San Mateo County Planning Commission, Meeting No. 1704, 4/28/21  
Written Comment re: Agenda Item No. 1: **383 Arlington Way Tree Removal Permit, PLN2021-0003**

Submitted by Pat Walker, 300 Arlington Way, Menlo Park

The San Mateo County Significant Tree ordinance points out that removal of significant trees results in the "loss of environmental benefits of trees in neighborhoods, such as noise reduction, oxygen replacement, carbon dioxide reduction, interception of particulates, aesthetic qualities".

One of the significant trees on the 383 Arlington Way property is a coast live oak, #14, which Planning and Building approved for removal to accommodate the design of a proposed house. The permit should be reversed.

1. The following article discusses the importance of oaks in particular to the environment and to birds:

<https://www.nytimes.com/2015/03/11/opinion/in-your-garden-choose-plants-that-help-the-environment.html>

This article was written by Dr. Douglas W. Tallamy, a professor at the University of Delaware:

<https://www.udel.edu/canr/departments/entomology-and-wildlife-ecology/faculty-staff/doug-tallamy/>

“In the past, we have asked one thing of our gardens: that they be pretty. Now they have to support life, sequester carbon, feed pollinators and manage water.”

— DOUG TALLAMY

Research activities

- Behavioral Ecology of Insects
- Conservation of biodiversity
- Impact of alien plants on native ecosystems
  - Plant-insect interactions

Department of Entomology and Wildlife Ecology, University of Delaware

Dr. Tallamy has just released a new book:

**The Nature of Oaks: The Rich Ecology of Our Most Essential Native Trees**

by [Douglas W. Tallamy](#)

With *Bringing Nature Home*, Doug Tallamy changed the conversation about gardening in America. His second book, the *New York Times* bestseller *Nature's Best Hope*, urged homeowners to take conservation into their own hands. Now, he is turning his advocacy to one of the most important species of the plant kingdom—the mighty oak tree.

Oaks sustain a complex and fascinating web of wildlife. *The Nature of Oaks* reveals what is going on in oak trees month by month, highlighting the seasonal cycles of life, death, and renewal. From woodpeckers who collect and store hundreds of acorns for sustenance to the beauty of jewel caterpillars, Tallamy illuminates and celebrates the wonders that occur right in our own backyards. He also shares practical advice about how to plant and care for an oak, along with information about the best oak species for your area.

*The Nature of Oaks* will inspire you to treasure these trees and to act to nurture and protect them.

2. Palo Alto Online had an article today, April 26, 2021, discussing the recent housing boom on the Midpeninsula including, in part, this statement: “affluent buyers relocating from densely developed cities like San Francisco flee south to purchase big houses surrounded by large oak trees . . . .”

[https://www.paloaltoonline.com/news/2021/04/24/covid-19-pandemic-drives-unexpected-housing-boom-as-midpeninsula-buyers-seek-more-space?utm\\_source=express-2021-04-26&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_campaign=express](https://www.paloaltoonline.com/news/2021/04/24/covid-19-pandemic-drives-unexpected-housing-boom-as-midpeninsula-buyers-seek-more-space?utm_source=express-2021-04-26&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=express)

I hope that the Planning Commission will take into account the importance of native oaks and reverse the permit to remove the significant trees that are the subject of this appeal.

## Healthy Spanish Fir (Tree #1) at 383 Arlington Drive



- This significant Spanish Fir is in fair health and condition per the arborist report
  - ***There is no risk-related or health reason to remove it***

*Anne Kortlander – Longtime Menlo Oaks Homeowner*

## Spanish Fir Does Not Conflict With Development



- This Spanish Fir tree is in the setback up front
- It is not in the way of any construction indicated for the site
  - ***Thus, preserving this tree does not result in any economic loss for the property owner***

# Grove of Trees Including This Spanish Fir at the Front of 383 Arlington



## Spanish Fir As Part of Grove Improves Neighborhood

- The Spanish Fir is part of a small grove of conifer trees on the front of the property facing Arlington Drive
  - As a companion tree, its branches and roots are intertwined with the redwoods in this small grove
  - ***Disrupting a grove of trees is strongly discouraged by County Tree Regulations***
- This Spanish Fir and its grove, despite the very large home that is planned for the site, will help maintain (to some extent) the woodsy and rural character of Menlo Oaks
  - ***This rural character is what makes Menlo Oaks a special and valuable place for existing homeowners***



## **Tree Supports Carbon Sequestration at 383 Arlington**

- Per government statistics, a mature tree such as this Spanish Fir sequesters 48 pounds of carbon dioxide a year
- A small tree -- such as the 15 gallon replacement trees that County Planning currently mandates -- only sequesters at best 30% of that
  - It takes many years for a replacement tree to grow into the same carbon sequestration value as a tree such as this Spanish Fir
  - The developer wants to remove the majority of the mature trees at 383 Arlington – that will result in a loss of the power of all of those trees to fight Climate Change
  - Each year Menlo Oaks loses many mature trees
- Preserving trees such as this Spanish Fir to reduce greenhouse gas emissions should be considered as much a part of San Mateo County's "Green Building Program to Address Climate Change" as any Green Building Codes

### **383 Arlington Way Tree Removal Permit, PLN2021-0003—Judy Horst, Appellant**

#### **The following are remarks to be read at meeting by Mary Ann Carmack (398 Menlo Oaks Drive):**

My husband and I live at 398 Menlo Oaks Drive and we share a long back fence with the property being developed. We have lived here many years: my husband for 55 years and I for 30 years.

We will be negatively impacted by this development in several ways.

#1 The plans call for a swimming pool and ADU to be placed right up against our back property line. As we spend many hours enjoying the peace and quiet of our backyard, we are likely to be impacted by noise from pool activities. We have requested that the developer consider moving the pool parallel to the side street, Madison Way, where there is not an adjacent property to impact, but they have not been sympathetic to our concerns.

#2 Particularly worrisome is the removal of many trees, especially a robust large coast live oak (tree #14, Exhibit A) which provides shelter to many birds—including a resident Peregrine Falcon—and shade and cooling to our neighborhood. This tree is being removed solely to accommodate the design of the house being built. It is hard to fathom why this is a valid reason to remove a heritage tree! On the other hand, an old and diseased valley oak (tree # 8, Exhibit B) is being spared, just because it does not interfere with the house footprint. It would make more sense to remove the diseased tree and design the home so as to preserve the healthy coast live oak (tree #14) which has many more years of life left. In any case, it is highly unlikely that the fragile old valley oak (#8) will survive the construction trauma, so we probably will be left with the loss of both trees.

What is profoundly concerning is the fact that we taxpaying property owners have not been represented by the county arborist who has not done an independent assessment of the trees. Of grave concern is evidence that the developer cannot be trusted. In a conference with her, we asked designer Pearl Renaker if she were aware that tree protection must extend to under the drip line. She replied [and I quote from my notes of that meeting]: “In general, but in some areas the arborist is willing to, you know, work with us to slightly reduce the areas.” Needless to say, this is NOT the intent of the ordinance! Ms. Renaker also said: “We are removing trees because we own the property, and we want to make use of the property.” So much for the design company’s claim that their focus is on “sustainable residential design...that intensifies connections with the surrounding ecosystem.”

Ms. Renaker also actually said: “Well, just think about the larger picture: that one tree is really not that significant.” Well, every tree is significant to our neighborhood and deserves to be protected under the law.

Given the attitudes of the designer that portend a disregard for our heritage trees and the rules that protect them, I would urge county officials to deny the permit to remove the Coast Live Oak, tree # 14. I further urge the Planning & Building department to be very vigilant in monitoring the developer and builder for violations of our ordinances as the project proceeds. Too often we’ve seen bulldozers parked right next to heritage and significant trees. Too often paint cans and excess lumber are put in trash piles beneath these older trees. And, the designer has already admitted to a willingness to violate the protection ordinance.

In conclusion: There are ordinances in place to protect trees, and it’s the County’s responsibility to make sure the ordinances are applied in favor of the trees, not to accommodate developers.

Thank you for listening.





From: [Lisa Ketcham](#)  
To: [Steve Monowitz](#); [Planning Commission](#)  
Cc: [Janneth Lujan](#)  
Subject: Planning Commission 4/28/21, Items 1 & 2  
Date: Monday, April 26, 2021 11:50:16 AM

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Director Monowitz and Planning Commissioners:

The attached photos illustrate questions & concerns related to both agenda items on April 28 Planning Commission agenda -- tree protection during construction and the Active Transportation Plan. The 2019 construction site at 354 & 358 Princeton Ave (BLD2016-02282 & 02281) is next door to the west of Mavericks House, which is the Pedestrian Priority Destination for Princeton recommended in the ATP.

The first image in 2019 shows row of 9 significant Monterey cypress in the Princeton Av ROW to be protected during construction. All branches facing the construction site have been cut off. Does the County consider the extent of branch removal that will be required by construction in determining which trees can realistically be saved? The applicant's arborist for Agenda Item 1 calls for any necessary branch removal to be performed by an arborist and not to exceed 4-inch diameter, although this has not been included in the Conditions of Approval for the project. (more text below with each image)



In the second 2019 image, all 9 cypress trees have been removed, stumps ground out, and utilities trenched in the ROW where the trees were. Should we assume this underground utility plan was modified after the trees were removed? It would be helpful to understand what the plan was when the building permit was issued and how it would have impacted the trees. What can be done to ensure that decision makers (in this case ZHO and CCC on appeal) know the realistic impacts of the proposed development on trees to be protected?



The 3rd & 4th images show the ROW today in front of these two properties, with extensive above-ground plumbing, and landscaping using up all the ROW outside the valley gutter, leaving pedestrians to walk in the street. Is it routine to locate this above-ground plumbing in the public ROW? Princeton Ave is the closest road to the shoreline and this south side of the street is the signed route of the Coastal Trail, offering harbor views and/or beach access at each corner. The Midcoast Parks & Recreation Committee prepared a report on the Coastal Trail through Princeton including existing conditions & needs to improve safety, adopted by the BoS in 2010, but never acted upon, even during DPW reconstruction of the road in 2011.

The Preferred Plan for Plan Princeton, released in 2015 (but not yet adopted), includes a chapter on Circulation and Streetscape, well informed by local public outreach and a Steering Committee of local stakeholders.



The ATP proposes crosswalks with curb ramps in an area with no curbs or sidewalks, to reach a private event center that can be reached without crossing the street by simply following the Coastal Trail way-finding signage.

Who was on the ATP Plan team that conducted the Princeton walk audit?

How did a private event venue become the pedestrian priority destination in Princeton, and not the Coastal Trail connecting the harbor to Pillar Point Bluff? Shouldn't a minimum be a clear walkable space on the shoulder? What benefit is a crosswalk when pedestrians are forced to walk in the street anyway?

Sincerely,  
Lisa Ketcham

