

January 17, 2024

Petaluma Tree Committee:

Thank you for addressing the need for an updated Tree Protection Ordinance. The draft ordinance appears to strengthen the intent of tree protection in Petaluma. I am hopeful that TPO implementation will help correct issues that have occurred to date.

I live near 23-25-27 Berger Lane, where remodeling and land subdivision into three parcels is currently proposed. In November 2022, the developer removed two mature black walnut trees from the property frontage, within the City right of way. I note that under the new ordinance, such a skirting of the regulations would result in project denial.

After that, they applied for and received approval for remodeling and grading permits and submitted an application for a lot split with ADUs. Additional trees were removed. Aside from the walnuts in the right of way, the rest of the property was pretty much clearcut, with a few oaks in the property corners that were not removed. Otherwise, the tree removal and canopy loss included heritage apples, native black walnuts, 14" DBH redwood and others. All in compliance with the current ordinance. All approved.

However, it appears that the City could potentially have been more proactive in conditioning tree protection as a part of regulatory approval. Some Tree Committee recommendations to City planning staff on how to treat issues such as this during plan review may be appropriate, along with directives on permit applications not to do any tree removal, demolition or minor grading in advance of permit submittals.

Although in single family/one parcel development, it is difficult to regulate the loss of canopy trees, this shows that we need to do better to protect our existing urban forest and somehow encourage thoughtful land development that respects existing conditions, rather than just checking off the regulatory boxes. Education and encouragement of city staff that have review authority is essential to effective administration of the TPO.

Although additional regulatory review can be cumbersome, perhaps there is a role for the Tree Committee to review applications when wholesale tree removal is proposed. Please continue the good work to protect our urban forest.

Thank you,  
Margaret Henderson ASLA  
Landscape Architect, CRLA 1689

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Cities such as Mill Valley have updated their tree ordinance to regulate the removal of all trees, regardless of species, and Sonoma County is in the process of updating the countywide regulations. Although additional regulatory review can be cumbersome, perhaps there is a role for the Tree Committee to review applications when wholesale tree removal is proposed.

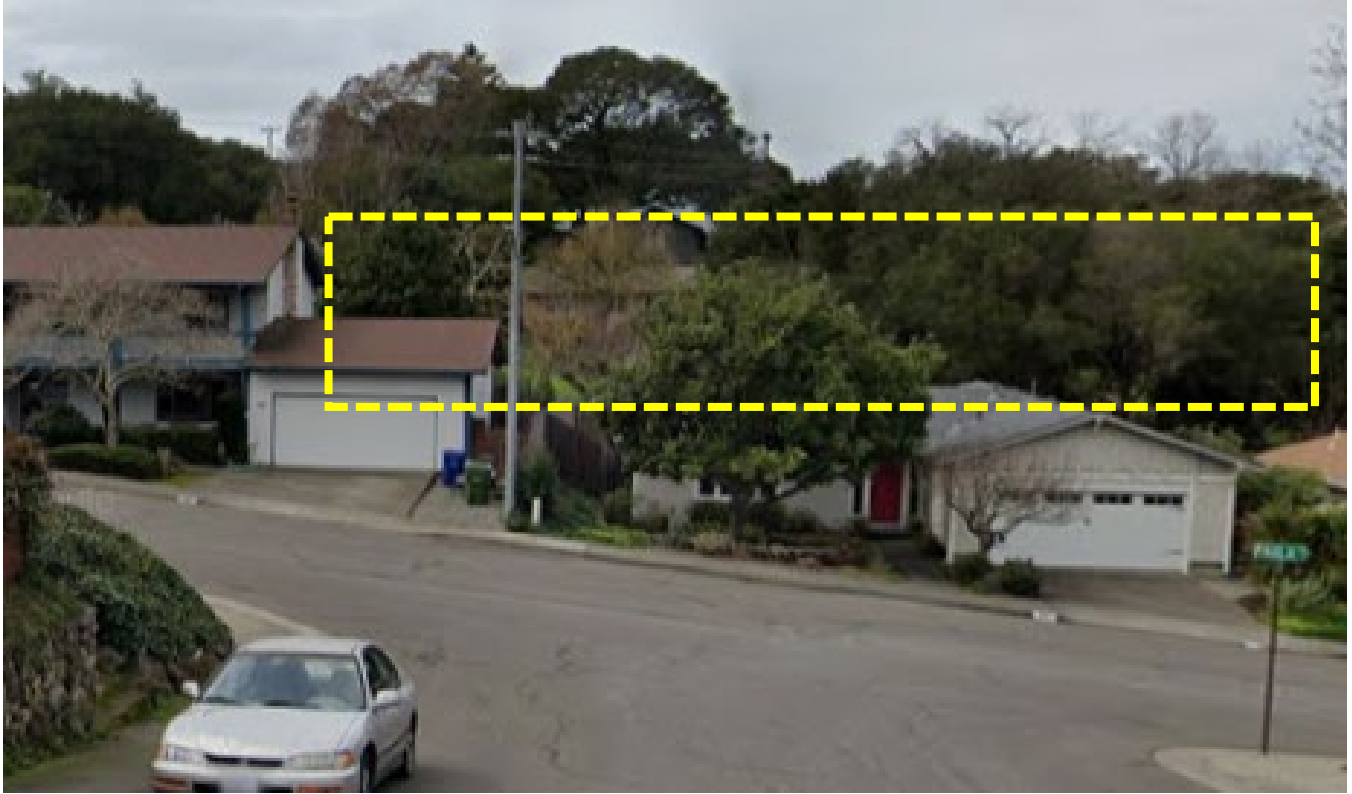
Please continue the good work to protect our urban forest.

Thank you,

Margaret Henderson ASLA  
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Mature walnuts removed November 12, 2022 (on site walnut removed 12-12-23)



View of property from Bonita Way, 2019



View of property, 1-17-2024