

July 1, 2025

To: City of Goleta Design Review Board
Fr: Eric Cárdenas, Director of Impact and Advocacy, SBBG
Re: Calle Real Shopping Center Improvements

Members of the Design Review Board,

After reading the staff report and attachments regarding the proposed Calle Real Shopping Center Improvements Project in Goleta, Santa Barbara Botanic Garden respectfully submits the following observations and suggestions for your consideration.

Native species support biodiverse and well-functioning ecosystems and are essential for human health and well-being. They improve our resilience against climate change impacts like excessive heat, drought, floods and wildfires, serve as wildfire buffers, and provide a range of other benefits including adding aesthetic, cultural, and spiritual value. When properly installed and maintained, California native plants are low-water and require no chemical fertilizers or pesticides.

In this time of global biodiversity loss, the Garden believes it is imperative that we act locally to reverse habitat decline wherever and whenever feasible, including by planting and restoring the native vegetation from within our region in our open spaces, on degraded properties, on redevelopment projects, and wherever opportunities allow.

The City of Goleta has taken many great strides to become a model “Green City,” and the Calle Real Shopping Center Improvement Project offers another small but significant opportunity to take key steps to address ecosystem health within city limits.

Our comments are primarily in response to sections seven and eight of the Project Proposal, as referenced below.

7. Adequate landscaping is provided in proportion to the project and the site with due regard to preservation of specimen and protected trees, and existing native vegetation.

New landscaping is proposed throughout the shopping center. Approximately 119 non-native trees are proposed for removal and 165 trees are proposed to be planted. No specimen, protected trees, and existing native vegetation will be removed as part of the project.

8. The selection of plant materials is appropriate to the project and its environment, and adequate provisions have been made for long-term maintenance of the plant material

Plant selection is a mix of California native plants and Mediterranean and Australian plants adapted to the dry conditions of southern California which will minimize maintenance and water requirements.

The Garden is extremely pleased that the current proposal calls for a mix of California native plants within the landscaping regimen, and that no existing native plant species on site will be removed. We are also pleased that the use of invasive plants shall be prohibited. However, we believe that additional California native plants and trees should be included in the proposal and would like to see a *minimum* of 30-50% of the entire landscaping element of the proposal be dedicated to California (local/regional) native plants.

The following are some specific comments for your review:

- We ask you to consider replacing some of the suggested drought tolerant Mediterranean and Australia plants, as well as olive and fruit trees, with trees and plants native to this region.
 - Native trees that provide habitat and biodiversity benefits should be the first consideration to provide canopy cover, shade, and to “minimize heat and glare from the pavement” as noted in the staff report.
- Like their non-native counterparts, native plants require a level of ongoing maintenance and management. With an expressed commitment to native landscaping on-site, we strongly recommend that any landscaping crews hired or contracted to work on the site be trained in the installation and care of native plants. California Native Plant Landscaper Certification (CNPLC) courses provide such training and are offered by Santa Barbara Botanic Garden. The Garden also has a list of existing CNPLC-certified landscapers available, which we are happy to provide.
- Native plants naturally require few, if any, pesticides, so working with native plants is a great way to reduce or eliminate pesticide use for the benefit and health of our community. We applaud the City of Goleta for moving in the direction of low/zero pesticides by increasing its commitment to native plants.

With 100 years of expertise in native plants and native plant ecology, the Garden would be happy to visit the site with City Planners/staff and/or offer a consultation on the proposed landscaping plan. We’d be happy to advise on the trees, shrubs, and plants that might be best suited for the site.

Beyond the Garden's intrinsic interest in the outcome of this process, the Garden recently helped facilitate the design of a *Community Vision and Policy Platform in Support of Biodiversity on California's Central Coast* with dozens of community organizations and stakeholders over the course of 2023, finalized in 2024. This platform, attached with this letter for your review, outlines policy goals aimed specifically at stopping the loss of biodiversity and reversing habitat decline.



These include: 1) Shaping Land Use Policy, 2) Engaging the Community and Galvanizing Support, and 3) Inspiring Government Leaders, Land Managers, and Residents to Act.

We wanted to make you aware that the Garden and our partners will increasingly be using this platform as a beacon under which we frame our work, and we hope you will join us. Of course, we're happy to share more about the Policy Platform in greater detail whenever appropriate.

Thank you again for allowing us the opportunity to comment on this important matter before you. And thank you again for considering native plants and regionwide ecosystem health as an important part of this proposal.

Sincerely,

Eric Cárdenas,
Director of Impact and Advocacy
Santa Barbara Botanic Garden

From: [Irene Cooke](#)
To: [City Clerk Group](#)
Subject: Calle Real Shopping Center
Date: Saturday, June 28, 2025 12:40:01 PM

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TO: City Council and Design Review Board members
RE: Comment on Calle Real Shopping Center Improvements

I am writing as the organizer of the Society of Fearless Grandmothers - SB and a resident of Goleta. The Grandmothers are concerned with the future we are leaving our grandchildren. You may be familiar with our "Roots of Resilience" quilt which has been displayed locally over the past few years; it illustrates ways we can "Protect-Regenerate-Build" a more resilient world in the face of climate change. <https://vimeo.com/757444351/6155f3526e>

We are concerned that the plans for Calle Real could incorporate more ways to increase resilience for our community. For example, it is encouraging that pedestrian access will be improved. However, it is disappointing that non-native species are being proposed for the replacement plantings.

Goleta has been a leader in recognizing the challenges of climate change and the environmental impacts we are facing. So why, when the City is encouraging water-wise landscaping, would we approve thirsty non-native olive and fruit trees?

It is common for landscaping planners to propose non-native Mediterranean and Australian plants and non-native grasses that are easily spread and invasive, simply because they are labeled "drought tolerant." Water use is a critical consideration, but an often-overlooked issue is the need to support our native pollinators -- the dozens of species of bees and butterflies that need native plants to thrive in our environment. As our climate becomes hotter, these important pollinators need all the help they can get! Please send these plans back to the drawing board to replace the proposed trees, shrubs and grasses with native species!

When considering future applications, please recognize the need to require native plant species to help make our community more resilient in the face of climate change.

Respectfully submitted,
Irene Cooke
374 Moreton Bay Lane#2
Goleta, CA 93117

Irene C. Cooke
970-531-0831



Social Justice Ministry
June 25, 2025
City Clerk Group, City of Goleta
130 Cremona Drive
Goleta, CA 93117

Dear Design Review Board and City Council:

We have reviewed the proposed development plans for the Calle Real Shopping Center. Most of the plans seem to make nice improvements to the Center, including a pedestrian connection to residences, construction of an open structure for public gathering, and increased seating area.

However, one change does not meet with our approval, and that is replacing the current trees and landscaping with thirsty trees such as olive and fruit trees, and the addition of non-native Mediterranean and Australian plants. Current landscaping includes non-native grasses that are easily spread and invasive, and these should be replaced. But why, especially in these days of climate change and global warming, would you consider plating more non-native plants? When a plant is drought-tolerant that is good, but not the only consideration. Native plants support native pollinators such as the over 100 native butterflies and over 1000 native bee species that make their homes on our Central Coast.

As a volunteer at the Santa Barbara Botanic Garden I have become very aware of the need to plant more natives in our gardens. And they are quite available in our nurseries. I recently conducted a survey of four Goleta retail nurseries and found a wealth of native species in every one. The improvements to the Calle Real Shopping Center are a great opportunity to showcase our native plants...let's not waste this chance.

Most Respectfully,
Carolyn Chaney, Chair

The **Social Justice Ministry**, *Live Oak Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Goleta*, CA
349 Moreton Bay Lane #1, Goleta, CA 93117 cchaney@sfsu.edu

cc. Travis Lee, Associate Planner