

Date: June 4, 2018

To: Chris Noddings, MESM , Assistant Planner, Department of Planning and Environmental Review, City of Goleta

From: Cecilia Brown and Fermina Murray, Goleta Residents

Subj: 18-048-LUP-DRB: Google Project at 301 Mentor Drive

As members of the Design Review Board at its formation and long-interested in quality development appropriate to our community and the landscapes that are an essential part of them, we were most concerned when we learned that the tenant improvement plans for the project included the removal of six well-established, healthy, drought tolerant and native Coast Live Oak trees (*Quercas agrifolia*) to make way for installing heavy equipment like chillers, generators and a UPS enclosure that the company needs.

As we are sure you are aware, Coast Live Oaks are native trees that have defined our community and shaped its history since the Chumash arrived here 13,000 years ago. Their acorns were a key staple that sustained the indigenous peoples all these millennia, and the sandstone sites where the Chumash ground their acorns are a prized feature of our local hiking trails. Although it is not yet mandated by the City, it is good urban forest practice for the City and our residents to protect Coast Live Oaks whenever we can, not remove them casually as a convenience.

Unfortunately, we were not aware of the nature of the project when it was heard before the DRB recently, otherwise we would have appeared before that body to make our concerns known. However, hearing from a DRB member after the meeting about some of the project issues, we made a site visit and reviewed the plans to familiarize ourselves with what the project was proposing. Our first concern is that the City deny the removal of the oak trees. There is no need for their removal when there are other places more suitable on the site for the equipment that does not require removal of the oak trees.

In this regard, we encourage the applicant to place the equipment away from the proposed new front side of the building. A careful review of the project with you revealed that the property currently has a total of 227 parking spaces. The required number for a building of its size is 210 parking spaces. Thus, the site has 17 spaces beyond which is required. We believe that the parking spaces at the very southern end of the project could be used for the installation of the equipment.

The equipment needs to be screened with walls or appropriate fencing and landscaping, but not with the proposed Eastern Red Bud (*Cercis Forest Pansy*) for the following reasons. The Red Bud is a small tree and deciduous in the winter and won't screen the equipment. It is native to the eastern United States and needs to be irrigated. (The Goleta Valley is in an extreme drought, and applicants new to the area need to be aware of this.) Vines or native shrubs, of which there are many choices, are more drought tolerant, compatible with the property's existing landscape, and therefore more appropriate for screening.

Are there noise or exterior lighting issues associated with the equipment? The noise is not a DRB concern but a land use issue. However, the community should know what the noise and lighting problems are, if any, be given a chance to comment, and the problems properly mitigated. In addition, any new or replacement exterior lighting on the site (building, parking lot, for the new equipment) needs to be dark site compliant. (We request that staff check this upon project completion to ensure that the dark lighting that was proposed is actually and appropriately installed.)

There are other landscape issues which need to be addressed. The eight Paperbark trees are proposed to be removed. What kind of trees and how many of them will replace them, and where will they be planted? New buildings being permitted may have conditions of approval which typically require maintenance of the landscaping for the life of the project. Since these Paperbark trees appear to be part of the original landscape plan, doesn't the city have a requirement for replacing trees that are removed? Removal of these Paperbark trees without replacement is not acceptable. The trees help to soften the rather industrial like building appearance. While the space is narrow for replacement trees, we would like the applicant and the city to consider the following as replacement landscape:

Many of the Myoporum shrubs at the western edge of the project (west of the oak trees) are either dead or diseased with thrips. We recommend these plants be removed and native plants replace them. There are many large native shrubs which would be acceptable and be a complement to the oak trees. These additional plants will help to add softened edges to the building site with its hardscape areas at its frontage. Please ensure that the project plans note this landscaping as a replacement.

We learned that the building had solar panels on its rooftop for a period of time. We think that a technologically advanced company like Google would have considered using solar panels, particularly to offset the additional energy that will be consumed with their new equipment (e.g. chillers, generators).

We and many other Goletans welcome Google to Goleta, the Good Land. We believe that Google would want to protect healthy native trees, help us promote our urban forest, use as much renewable energy as possible, and preserve green space for its employees and for the community at large.

We appreciate your consideration of our requests and look forward to participating in the next DRB hearing for the project at the end of June. Thank you!

Sincerely,
Fermina Murray and Cecilia Brown

Copy to:
The Goodland Coalition
Peter Imhof, Director PERS, City of Goleta
Mary Change, Senior Planner, City of Goleta