

**Planning & Zoning
Committee of the
MidCoast
Community Council**
PO Box 64, Moss Beach
CA 94038
Serving 12,000 residents

August 11, 2003

To: Gabrielle Rowan

San Mateo County Planning and Building Division
Mail Drop PLN122, 455 County Center
Redwood City, CA 94063
650.363.1829 - FAX: 650.363.4849

re: PLN2003-00375: application to remove 5 Monterey cypress trees at 741 Edison St. in Montara.

Gabrielle:

I examined the trees in question for this permit, and have the following comments, For clarity, I am including a diagram at the end of this letter based on the application to indicate which tree is which. The trees are designated A thru E. Another 20" cypress is located approx. 10' in front (south) of tree A. This tree appears to be destined for removal as part of the approved residence (PLN2003-00225). Three other cypress sit to the left (east) of the property, approx. 12' from tree E.

1. No arborist report was provided to substantiate the claim of "diseased" on the application. Visual inspection showed no obvious sign of disease or infestation. The trees have been badly maintained and are very crowded and unbalanced, which has resulted in some evident weakening of their structures. Some ground level trunk wounds and fungal matting seemed evident, but not serious. Recent pruning and breakages of limbs appeared to be healing over properly.
2. These trees are not mentioned for removal in the submitted plans for the residence (PLN2003-00225), and the preliminary landscape design submitted for Design Review shows these trees as part of the proposed landscaping for the lot. The arborist report submitted with the residence did not address these trees. As part of the argument for removal is that some of the trees are "leaning toward to be constructed house", this should have been a consideration in the Design Review process and not a separate removal permit. That this permit was applied for before the closing of the appeal period for the residence, it should have been noted as a change to the approved landscaping concept of the residence.
3. Tree A has a bad lean to the west and to the north, toward the street and toward to the neighboring structure. It was "topped" at some point in it's life, and has not been subsequently maintained. Almost all growth is to the west side of the tree, and the trunk shows signs of weakening from stress.
4. Tree B has a slight lean to the south, but appears structurally sound and may be retainable with decent pruning.
5. Tree C also has been topped and not maintained, and leans and has branched unbalanced to the north. Like A, it shows sign of stress weakening.

6. Trees D and E may be co-leading trunks of the same tree, or else are growing very tightly together. D has very pronounced lean to the south and appears weakened – E appears structurally sound and retainable with proper care.
7. Consideration needs to be given to potential wind damage to any remaining trees after any removal – six of the trees on the lot are already designated to be cut down for the structure, which will have a significant effect on the amount of wind the remaining trees to the north and east will be subject to. Trees within the sheltered parts of these small groves are seldom developed enough to withstand direct exposure to storms and high winds and often suffer significant failure the first storm season after being exposed. Further tree removal on this parcel could present a significant increase of this threat to surrounding trees, especially those on the parcel immediately to the east.
8. Likewise, a significant reduction of the tree canopy and root mass in the area could negatively impact the drainage and erosion problems of this parcel and the one to the north. Cypress canopies can hold and buffer up to 20% of rainfall during normal conditions, and even when fully saturated in heavy storms, still buffer the rate and impact of which rain water hits the ground.
9. The proposed replacement trees of crepe myrtle and red plum are not indigenous or coastal area trees, and would not provide the same degrees of habitat, shade, wind break and water absorption as any of the trees proposed for removal. They also represent a significant change to the landscaping plan submitted for Design Review.

In light of these considerations, I would recommend that:

- A. the Planning Department consider whether this is the proper procedure in regards to its relationship with the Design Review application and process,
- B. that a qualified arborist report assess the health and structural integrity of the trees and their ability to be retained,
- C. that impacts to potential damage to surrounding trees, and potential impacts to drainage, flooding and erosion for any removal be properly assessed and addressed
- D. that suitable replacement trees, in terms of their benefits and contributions to the urban coastal tree resource, be designated for any removed.

Thank you for your help, and please keep us informed of any further developments, hearings, approvals or appeals concerning this application.



Chuck Kozak
Chair, MCC Planning & Zoning Committee
PO Box 370702
Montara, CA 94037
650.728.8237 (home) - 650.996.8998 (mobile) - cgk@montara.com

