

**DATE:** May 11, 2022

**TO:** Urban Forestry Board

**FROM:** Hoa Nguyen, Assistant Civil Engineer  
Robert Gonzales, Principal Civil Engineer  
Edward Arango, Assistant Public Works Director/City Engineer

**SUBJECT:** **El Camino Real Pedestrian and Bike Improvements, Project 20-61—Heritage Tree Mitigation**

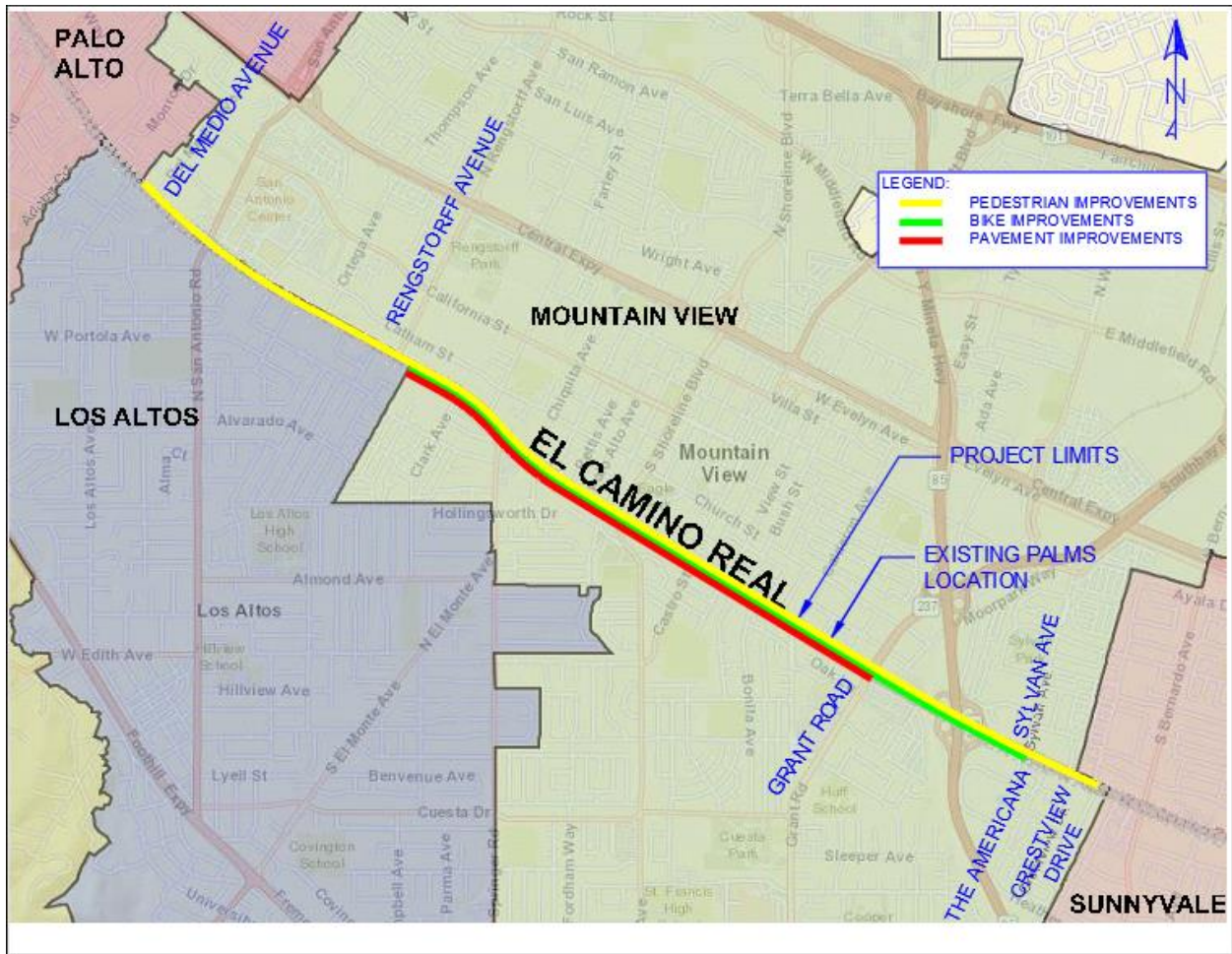
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**RECOMMENDATION**

Review the proposed Heritage tree mitigation for El Camino Real Pedestrian and Bike Improvements, Project 20-61, and forward a recommendation to the City Council to approve the mitigation of two Heritage trees at 96 West El Camino Real, with replacement of a 2:1 tree replacement ratio, with the planting of two 24-inch box trees in the new planting area being installed at the site and two 24-inch box trees nearby in the center median of El Camino Real.

**BACKGROUND**

El Camino Real is a State-owned and operated highway within the jurisdiction of the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans). Caltrans is planning a large-scale, multi-county pavement rehabilitation project on El Camino Real from State Route 237/Grant Road to Sand Hill Road in Palo Alto. In Mountain View, the project will repave El Camino Real between State Route 237/Grant Road and the westerly City limits near south of Rengstorff Avenue, provide bicycle improvements between Sylvan Avenue/The Americana and south of Rengstorff Avenue, and install pedestrian improvements between Crestview Drive and Del Medio Avenue (Figure 1). Staff is coordinating with Caltrans to incorporate the City's pedestrian and bicycle safety improvements recommended by the El Camino Real Streetscape Plan into Caltrans' pavement rehabilitation project.



**Figure 1: Project Location in Mountain View**

In 2019, Council adopted the El Camino Real Streetscape Plan establishing design guidelines for multi-modal transportation and streetscape improvements throughout the City’s four-mile El Camino Real corridor. The improvements include adding bikeway facilities via parking removal between Sylvan Avenue/The Americana and the City limits near south of Rengstorff Avenue; upgrading existing City-owned curb ramps to ADA compliance and adding curb extension at intersections; providing other pedestrian crossing enhancements, such as high-visibility crosswalk markings, advanced stop bars, and bicycle detection at intersections; and installing new crosswalks at Pettis Avenue, Bonita Avenue, and Crestview Drive. The bicycle improvements along El Camino Real are critical needs for this corridor to provide bicycle facilities for users accessing various destinations, including restaurants, retail, the Community Center, parks, and schools.

At 96 West El Camino Real, there are two existing palm trees in the parking strip, and the curb protrudes towards the vehicle lanes restricting the installation of new bike facilities along this

section. The palm trees are Heritage trees as defined in the Mountain View City Code. Staff proposes to remove the two Heritage trees in order to allow for the installation of the new bike facilities.

Staff requests that the Urban Forestry Board provide a recommendation to the City Council for the number, size, and location of replacement trees, which is the focus of the Urban Forestry Board's purview, as defined in the following City Code Section 32.33, City Capital Improvement Projects:

“City capital improvement projects which propose the removal of any heritage tree shall be submitted by the city project staff to the city's arborist for review and recommendation of appropriate mitigation measures. The arborist's recommendations shall be forwarded by city project staff to the urban forestry board for their recommendation on the number, size and location of replacement trees. The recommendation of the urban forestry board shall be forwarded by city project staff to the city council for their consideration with the approval of the project.”

## **ANALYSIS**

The bicycle improvements along El Camino Real include installation of Class IV protected bikeways and Class II bike lanes by removing existing on-street parking along El Camino Real from Sylvan Avenue/The Americana to just south of Rengstorff Avenue.

The curb at 96 West El Camino Real creates a constraint restricting the installation of a continuous Class IV protected bikeway on westbound El Camino Real between Bay Street and Montgomery Street. The curb protrudes along this location around two existing palms (Figure 2), and these palms will need to be removed to allow the curb to be realigned and Class IV bikeway to be installed. In coordination with the Caltrans project, the City has agreed to remove the two trees as a separate City project and in advance of the Caltrans project. Once the trees are removed, Caltrans will realign the curb with their project and a 4' wide tree-well area, consistent with other El Camino Real locations, will be available for the City to then install trees.

At the end of March, the City received an informal development application to redevelop the existing site at 96 West El Camino Real with a 70-unit affordable apartment building. An informal application is preliminary in nature, and it is unknown whether the proposed development project will move forward. Should the development project move forward, the frontage sidewalk improvements would be widened slightly to accommodate the new El Camino Precise Plan standards of a 12' sidewalk. The timing of the development's construction completion would likely take place after the Caltrans project, and staff recommends the installation of the new trees take place after these improvements are completed. This may result in an additional delay between the realignment of the curb and installation of new trees. Staff would coordinate with

the development team to ensure the trees are installed after completion of the development. Should the proposed development project not proceed, staff would have the trees installed as originally outlined after Caltrans completes the curb realignment and paving.

In May 2020, as part of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) process for the El Camino Real Streetscape Plan, the certified arborist report prepared by HMH confirmed that these two palms are Canary Island date palms and are classified as Heritage trees with circumferences of 88". The palms' removal and replacement recommendations were included in the CEQA documentation and filed with the County of Santa Clara in September 2021.



**Figure 2: Two existing Canary Island Date Palms at 96 West El Camino Real**

Staff recommends removal over transplant of these two palm trees after consulting with specialized tree transplanting companies. These two palm trees are not good candidates for transplanting because of their size and safety concerns when transporting them on public roads. Staff recommends the standard 2:1 mitigation ratio, including two 24-inch box trees, to be planted along the 96 West El Camino frontage and two 24-inch box trees to be planted in the El Camino center median in close proximity to the project site. The tree species will be consistent

with the El Camino Real Streetscape Plan tree palette and will include one or more of the following: Scarlet oak, Valley oak, Western redbud, or toyon.

**FISCAL IMPACT**

As part of the Fiscal Year 2019-20 Capital Improvement Program (CIP), the City Council approved funding for El Camino Real Bike Improvements, Project 20-61. El Camino Real Bike Improvements, Project 20-61, is funded in the amount of \$1.3 million from the Construction/Conveyance Tax Fund.

Tree mitigation will be funded from the same project budget.

**PUBLIC NOTICING**

In addition to the standard agenda posting, staff posted notices on the Heritage trees identifying them for removal and provided information for attending this meeting. Notices were mailed to property owners and residents within 750' of the project site.

HN-RG-EA/4/PWK  
934-05-11-22M

cc: CTE, F/c