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To: [City Council](#)
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Dear City Council,

Recently I read all 100+ pages of our Tree Master Plan. Here is my main request which I gave to the consultants gathering feedback, which now hopefully can apply to the biodiversity strategy (and the urban forest subsection) as well:

"Writing a 20 page version of the master plan

The master plan, although containing beautiful prose and illustrations, is hard to read because it is incredibly repetitive. It starts out with 10 pages of "trees are good," and then often repeats those same facts throughout other sections. Statistics such as the canopy cover pair of 17.7 and 22.7% are repeated 11 times! The "7 year cycle" for maintenance is repeated 5 times. One should think of who the intended audience is, and then deliver the facts non-repetitively and succinctly, to maximize the chance that it will be used as a reference."

If generating these overly-long and overly-pretty documents adds to expense, then I think it is doubly counter-productive.

Beyond this, I would recommend asking SFEI to partner, as they did in East Palo Alto, with organizations such as Canopy, which are familiar with the urban environment. What might work in nature preserves, where native species are a priority, is not necessarily right for inhabited areas, with all their many constraints.

For example, did you know that typically the number of species per square mile is higher in human disturbed than in natural areas? Sure, one of those species is the common rat, but by some definition, we already have a diverse, human-adapted environment.

A second example is that urban gardens are excellent in supporting both native and non-native bees, because collectively people plant an incredible diversity of shrubs, trees and leafy plants, which flower for a greater part of the year than just natives do. Bees appreciate this. In contrast, the native buckeye tree is poisonous to non-native honey bees (at least one of my neighbors is a bee keeper; do we want to endanger people's hobby of honey production?).

I also sometimes wonder about the consequence of trying to restore native habitat in urban

settings, (e.g. planting native oaks), without the native predator (hawk) being available to keep the squirrel population in check. Our urban skies are ruled by crows which effectively chase the hawks away. The crows also eat acorns. So by planting oaks we could be ending up with a ton of squirrels and a ton of crows -- not what the native environment in the nearby foothills looks like. Squirrels feast on any attempt at growing vegetable and fruit gardens. Would a more diverse environment, including non-native drought tolerant trees among the oaks, be more livable? (this is just speculation on my end, but I hope people making a plan will have this specific "urban environment" expertise).

It could very well be that the natural environment that preceded urbanization had fewer trees. But it may be better for livability that we have more trees, with bigger canopy, to make walking and spending time outside more pleasant.

In short, I hope we'll be sensible about making our green spaces work for us as city dwellers.

Thanks!