

From: Lada Adamic
To: Parks and Recreation Commission
Cc: Whyte, Brandon; Lo, Ria
Subject: public comment for June 14, 2023 agenda item 6.1 Shoreline pathway
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Dear Parks & Rec Commissioners,

I wanted to express concern about planting California buckeyes and oaks as part of this project. By way of introduction, I am someone who has read multiple "plant natives" books, including "The Nature of Oaks" and several other volumes by Doug Tallamy, so I am well familiar with the potential benefits of planting natives to bolster biodiversity.

First the oaks. Valley oaks are magnificent trees and I greatly enjoy seeing them in the nature preserves that ring the Bay Area. I am also very glad that they are not susceptible to sudden oak death. I also realize that they are one of the very few local California native trees that provide significant canopy. However, in addition to supporting the many butterflies, wasps and other native species that we may be excited about, they support the urban pests that are part of our disturbed landscape: namely: squirrels, crows, raccoons, and jays, all of which feast on the acorns and then reproduce in great numbers. If you look up predators of squirrels, they are eagles, hawks, owls, snakes, foxes, coyotes, bobcats, weasels, and alligators. All of these, save the alligators, you can find in nearby nature preserves, where, unsurprisingly, squirrel overpopulation is not a problem. But we don't have them in the city, and we do have squirrels in crazy numbers.

Why I don't like squirrels in gardens (they are great in forests):

- 1) They make growing fruit trees frustrating. e.g. they'll take apricots just before they are fully ripe, take a bite, then discard. I gave up on growing anything but citrus, just because of squirrels.
- 2) They dig up new plantings, potted plants, and mulched areas, searching for stashed acorns.
- 3) They screech in an annoying way (to my ear more annoying than crows, maybe equal to jays)
- 4) They have chewed through the string lights on our patio two years in a row (beyond the replacement expense, this requires us to use a ladder in a precarious spot to re-install).
- 5) They plant acorns all over, and I end up weeding dozens of oak seedlings each year, even though we don't have an oak tree in our yard, nor do our adjacent neighbors (apparently, squirrels will go up to 200ft from a tree to plant the most viable acorns).

Why I don't like crows in the city (at least in the huge numbers we have them, otherwise they are very cool birds that I like seeing, just not in my own back yard, ha-ha):

- 1) They chase away the hawks (maybe without crows, the hawks could keep the squirrels

in check, but alas...)

2) They deposit great quantities of bird droppings onto our patio from the large canopy tree that shades it

Raccoons we thankfully don't have in our back yard, but I've seen them in Mountain View and they are mostly trouble (ref Toronto's battle with trash-stealing raccoons), and jays I can tolerate but also don't miss terribly if they are in smaller numbers.

So, my very long-winded point is: when increasing biodiversity, please think of the ecosystem we are dealing with, which in this case is an urban one that lacks predators that will control the acorn-eating "urban pest" population that is part of the city scape. How many extra squirrels and crows will this planting result in? That is a calculation that needs to be done. Maybe the calculation will show that it is still worth it to plant oaks, but pest costs should be taken into account.

Finally, I note that the valley oaks are planted adjacent to the path, which could result in squirrels running across the path frequently, creating a hazard for bikes. One can hope that given the dense canopy of the beautiful existing trees on the site, most of which will be kept, the squirrels would primarily jump between canopies rather than running across the path and being annoying.

For the California buckeye, whenever I read about that tree or encounter one on a Canopy-led tree walk, I am told it is poisonous to honeybees. I know at least one neighbor two blocks over who keeps bees, and judging by the many honeybees that frequent the flowers in our garden (along with several species of native bees), I'd say he's not the only one. I have no firsthand experience with buckeye bee poisoning, but if this is a real issue, then perhaps we shouldn't plant these trees in town.

Thank you for considering the potential unintended consequences of planting oaks and buckeyes.

Sincerely,

Lada Adamic