



DATE: February 11, 2014

CATEGORY: New Business

DEPT.: Public Works

TITLE: **Central Expressway Sidewalk Improvements, Project 11-44**

RECOMMENDATION

1. Adopt the Mitigated Negative Declaration of Environmental Impact for the Central Expressway Sidewalk Improvements, Project 11-44, and find that the Initial Study reflects the independent judgment of the City Council in accordance with the California Environmental Quality Act.
2. Approve the removal of up to five Heritage trees and replacement at a 3 to 1 ratio (a total of 15) with 24" box trees.
3. Approve plans and specifications for Central Expressway Sidewalk Improvements, Project 11-44, and authorize staff to advertise the project for bids.
4. Authorize the City Manager to award the construction contract to the lowest responsible bidder if the low bid is within the project budget.

BACKGROUND

In 1991, the Santa Clara County Board of Supervisors adopted a "Policy for Bicycle and Pedestrian Usage of Expressways" that stated the County is committed to accommodating pedestrians, to the extent possible, along the expressways. The County's 2003 Pedestrian Element furthered that policy and developed a list of new sidewalk locations along expressways to close gaps on otherwise continuous sidewalks, including along Central Expressway.

On March 29, 2011 and June 22, 2011, the City received grants from the County of Santa Clara and the Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC), respectively, in the amount of \$150,000 each (a total of \$300,000 from both agencies) for sidewalk improvements along Central Expressway. The grant funds must be expended by June 30, 2014. There are currently sidewalks on the north side of Central Expressway from

San Antonio Road to Granada Drive and on Wentworth Street from Granada Drive to Gemini Avenue. The proposed improvements will fill a gap in the existing sidewalk network on the north side of Central Expressway between Gemini Avenue and Moffett Boulevard/Castro Street (see Exhibit A). Pedestrians currently use this path without sidewalks.

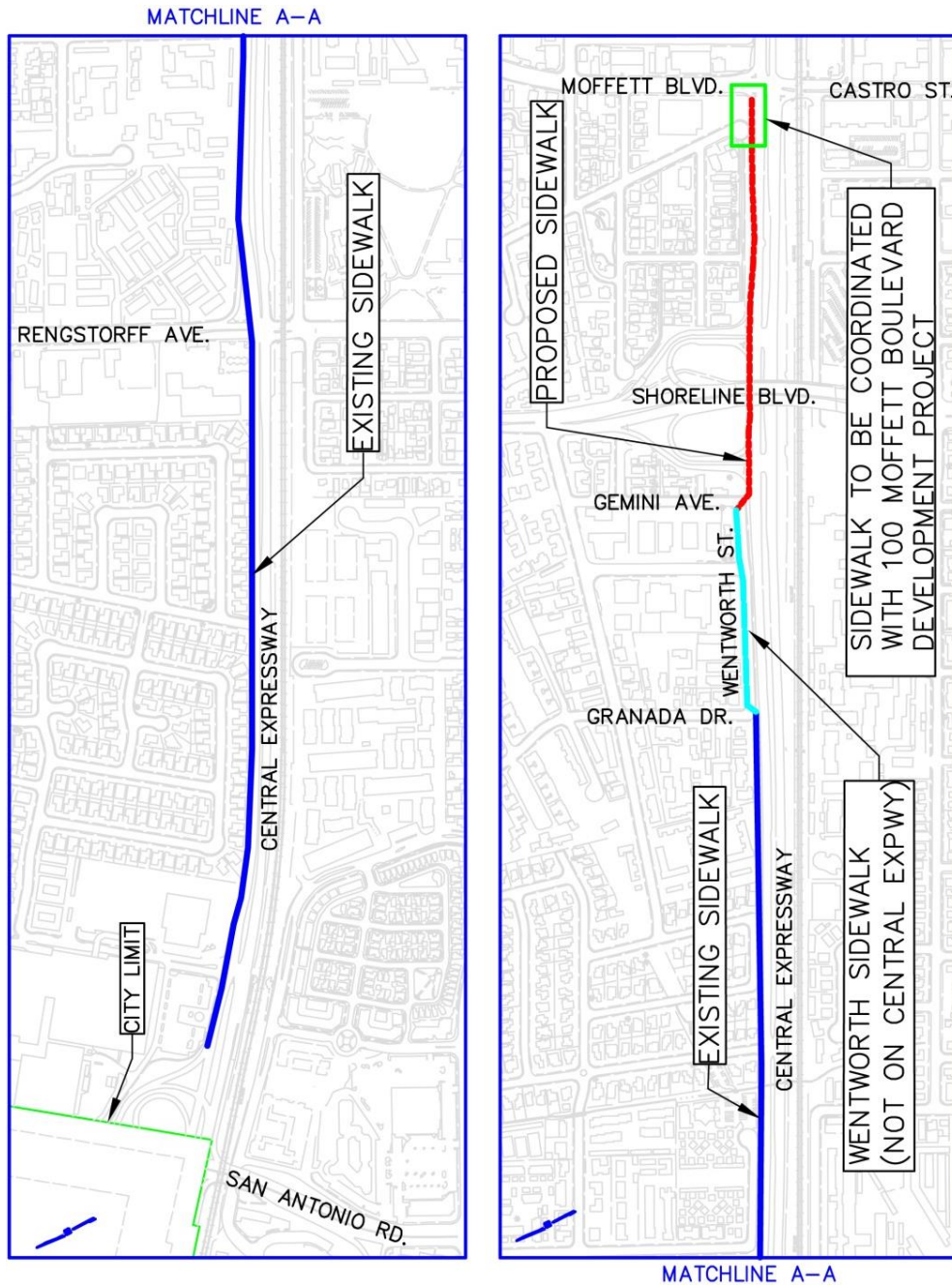


Exhibit A – Central Expressway Sidewalk

When completed, a continuous sidewalk would exist from downtown Mountain View to the Palo Alto city limit along the expressway. The sidewalk will be owned and maintained by the County of Santa Clara. Exhibits B and C show photos of the existing sidewalk and area where sidewalk installation is being proposed.



Exhibit B – Existing Sidewalk on Central Expressway at Farley Street Looking East



Exhibit C – Proposed Sidewalk Location on Central Expressway at Gemini Avenue Looking East

ANALYSIS

Central Expressway Sidewalk Improvements

The recommended improvements include approximately 1,500' of 5' wide sidewalk, curb ramps, trees, signs, and high-visibility crosswalks. To minimize tree removal, the sidewalk is within 2' of the curb over much of this distance. On the westerly edge of the project, the sidewalk would connect to Wentworth Street, where a sidewalk parallels Central Expressway. The new sidewalk then crosses the Shoreline Boulevard on- and off- ramps, where up to five Heritage trees may need to be removed to provide a clear line of sight between motorists on the ramp and pedestrians. With the possibility that not all five Heritage trees need to be removed, the trees will be removed one by one until a clear line of sight between motorists and pedestrians is established. It is expected that three Heritage trees will need to be removed. The two trees farthest from the intersection will be evaluated during construction to determine if they can be preserved (see Exhibit D). The two traffic signals at the Central Expressway and Shoreline Boulevard ramp intersections will be modified to include pedestrian signals at the crossings.

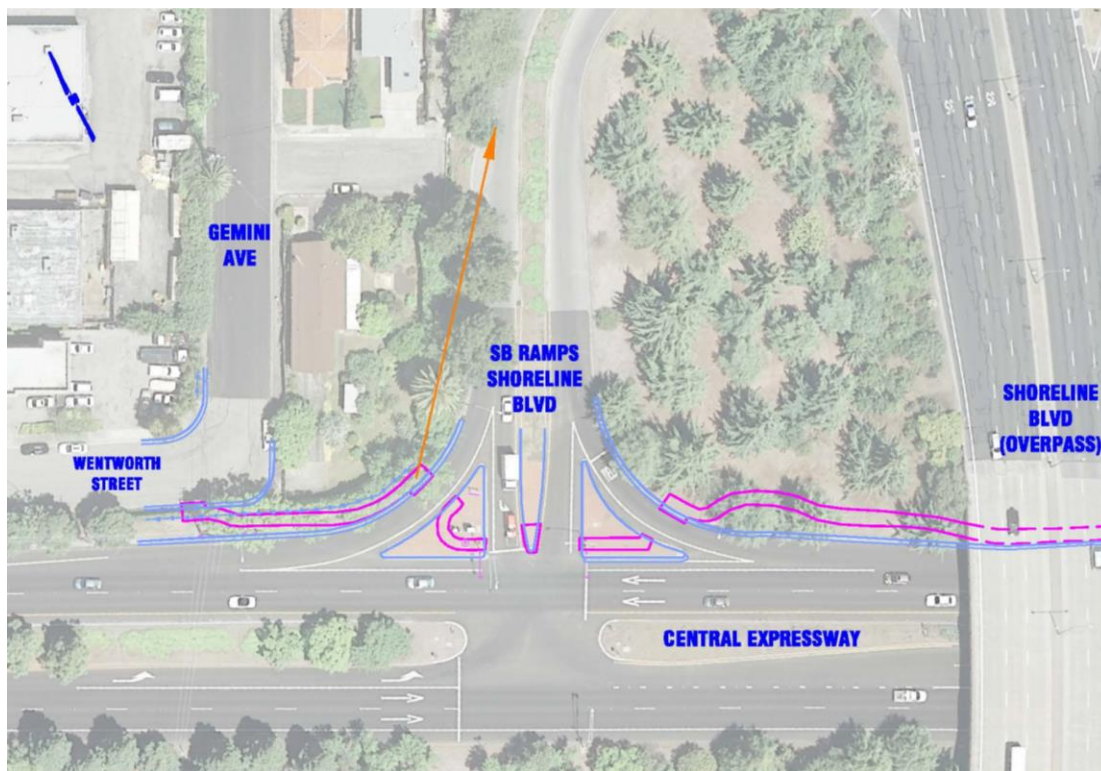


Exhibit D – Pedestrian Sight Line of Shoreline Boulevard Southbound Ramp

At the northbound ramps, tree trimming is proposed in order to provide adequate sight distance (see Exhibit E).

The sidewalk project will be coordinated with the 100 Moffett Boulevard development project to avoid duplication of efforts, as shown on Exhibit A.

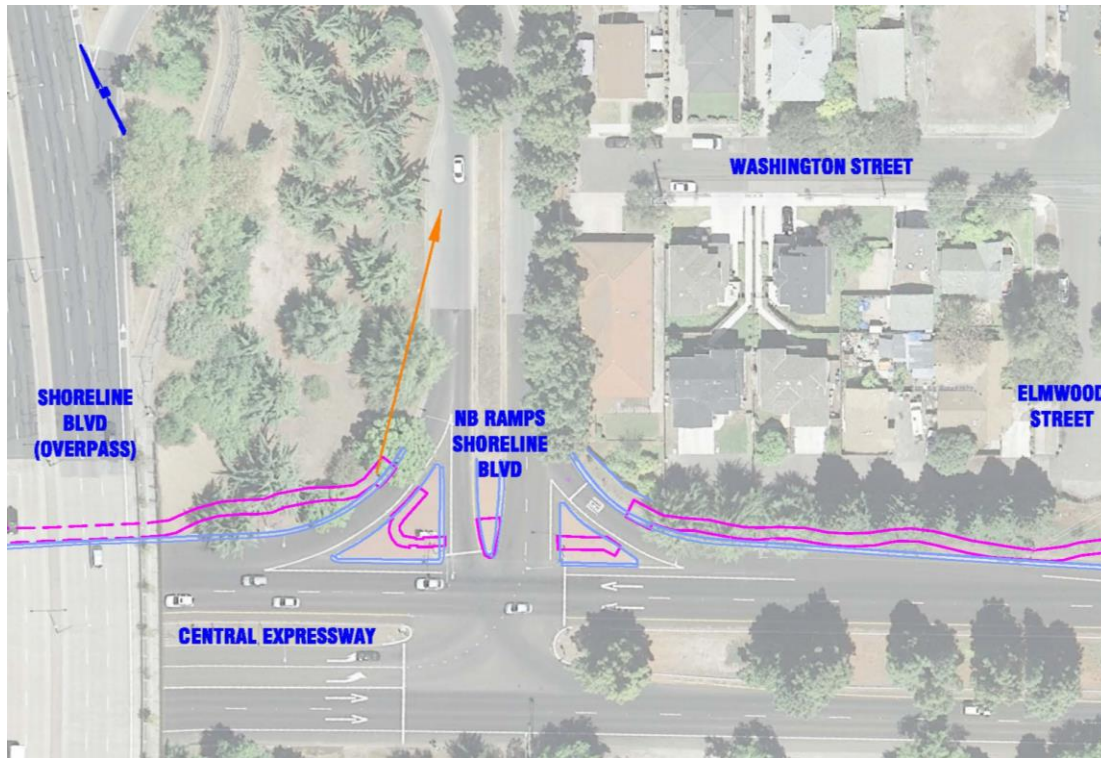


Exhibit E – Pedestrian Sight Line of Shoreline Boulevard Northbound Ramp

Heritage Tree Removal

On November 13, 2013, staff presented the project to the Parks and Recreation Commission (PRC), acting as the Urban Forestry Board, requesting a recommendation for Heritage tree removal mitigation. At that time, design was not yet complete and it appeared that seven Heritage trees would need to be removed. With the design now complete, two of the trees have been preserved and the project proposes removal of up to five Heritage trees (with the possibility of preserving two of these Heritage trees) and four non-Heritage trees. The PRC recommended a mitigation replacement ratio of 3 to 1 with 24" box trees. If approved, this ratio would result in the planting of up to 15 new trees as part of the project. A photo of the Heritage trees proposed for removal are shown in Exhibit F and the locations of the trees proposed for removal are shown in Exhibits G through I.



Exhibit F – Heritage Trees Causing Sight Distance Issues

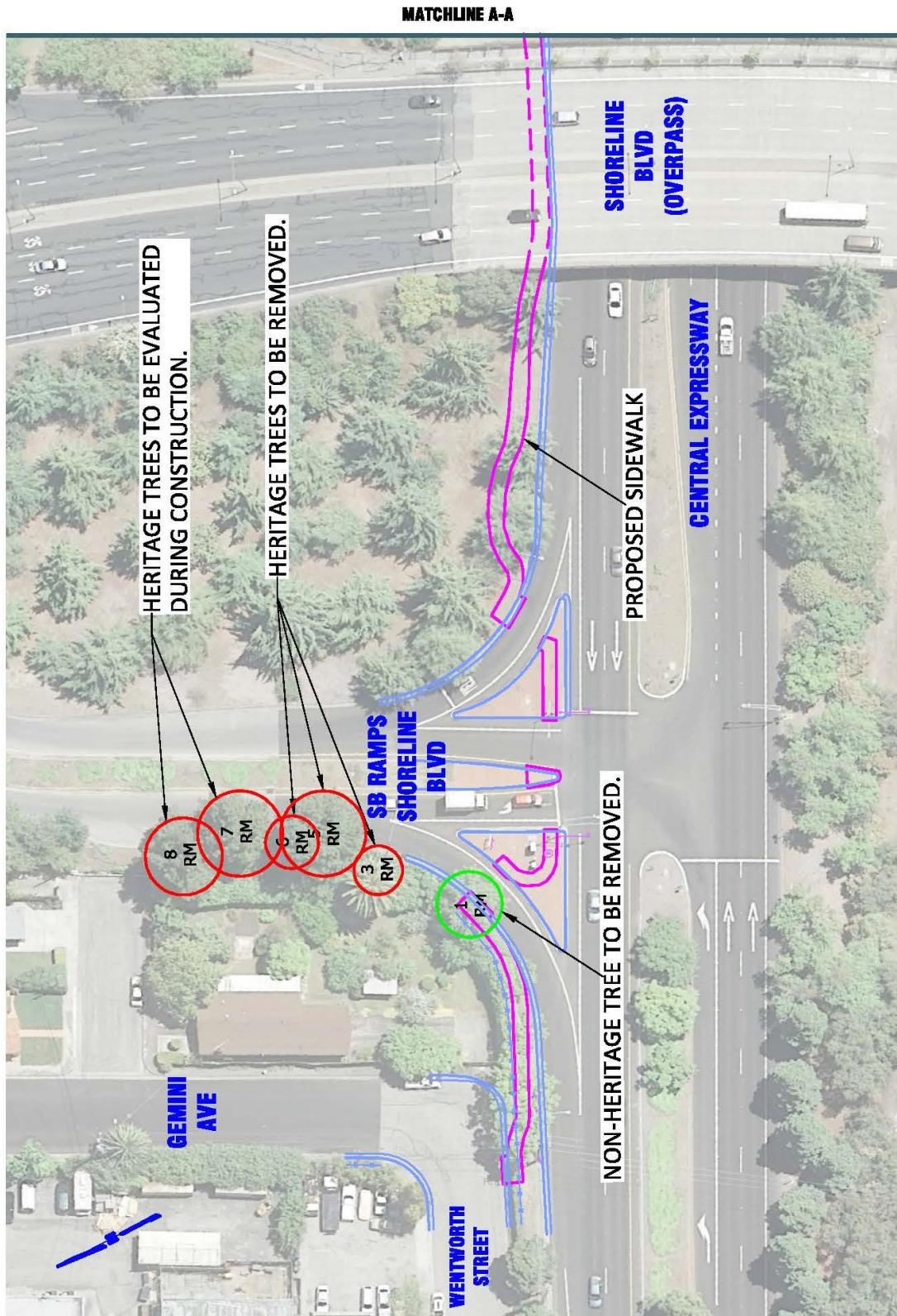
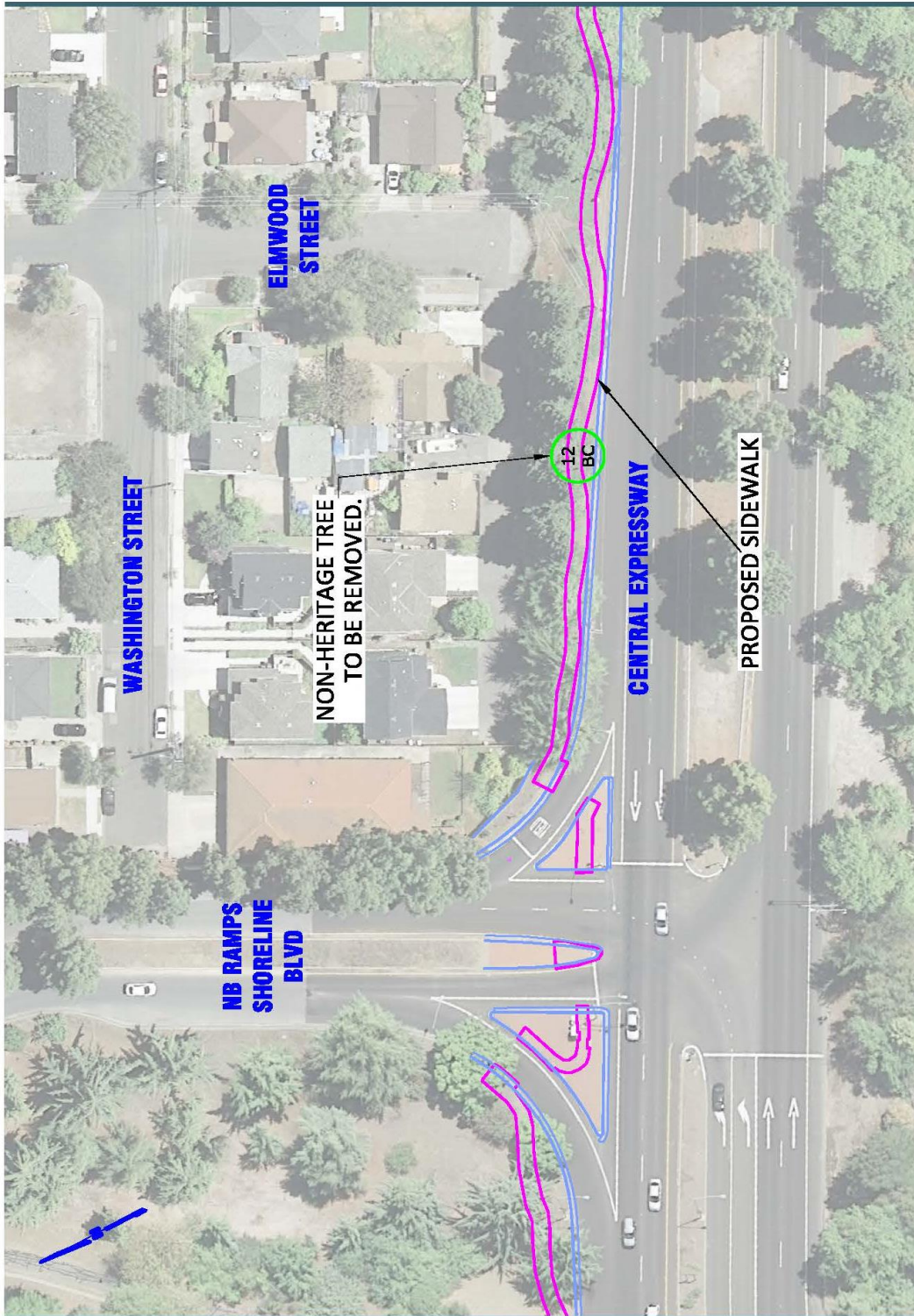


Exhibit G – Location of Proposed Tree Removal

MATCHLINE B-B



MATCHLINE A-A

Exhibit H – Location of Proposed Tree Removal

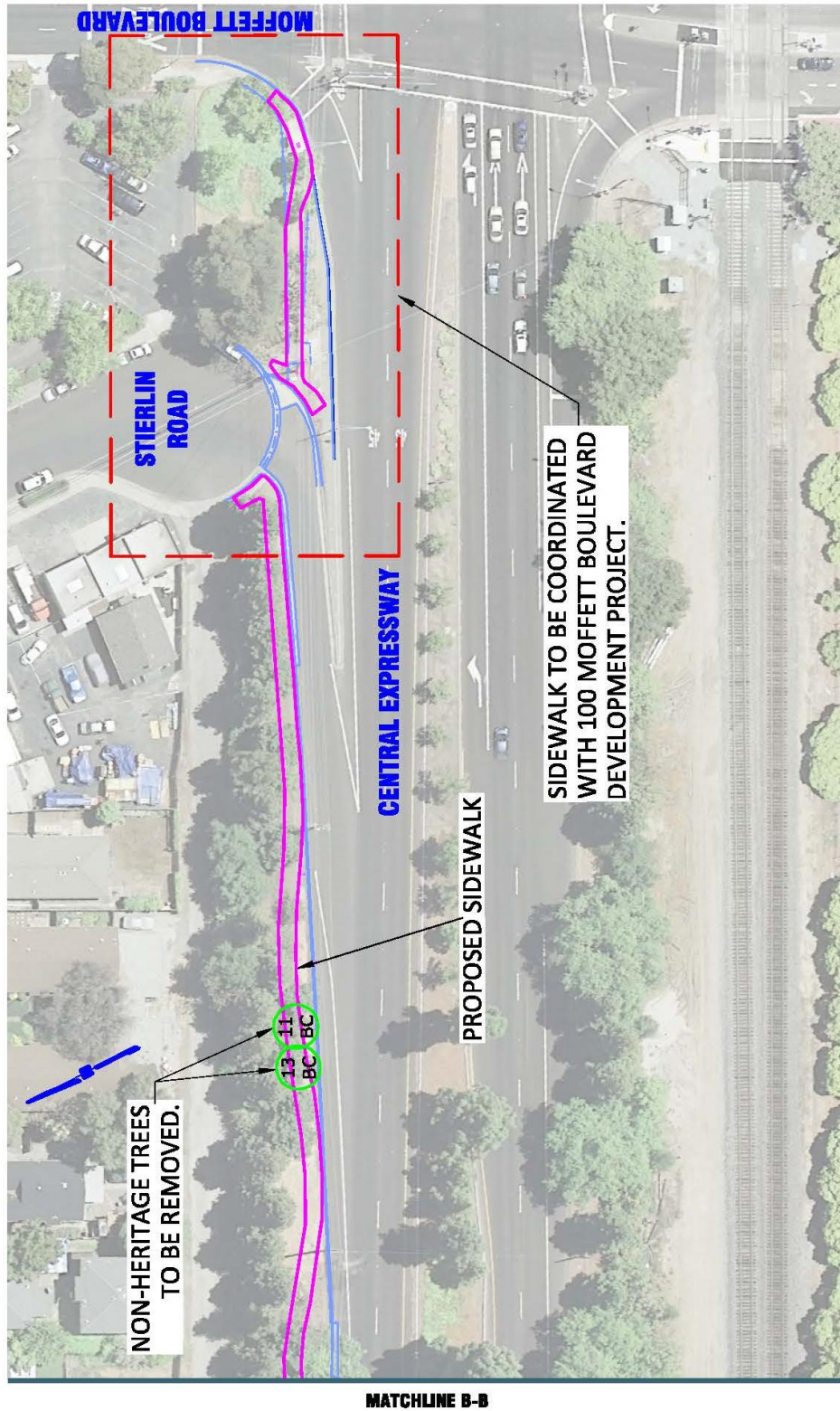


Exhibit I—Location of Proposed Tree Removal

Design Issues Raised by the PRC

The PRC raised concerns about several aspects of the project design. One concern is that the sidewalk is relatively close to the curb along Central Expressway with only a small (2' minimum) landscape buffer. While not ideal, this design is consistent with other existing sidewalks along Central Expressway in Mountain View and minimizes tree removal. The PRC suggested that the buffer be increased, even if additional tree removal is required.

Staff investigated an alternative alignment that provides a minimum 5' buffer (and more where possible) between the sidewalk and the roadway. This alternative design results in the removal of 12 additional trees (11 Heritage and 1 non-Heritage; see Exhibits J through L). Some of these trees provide screening to neighboring residences. With the tree removals along the Shoreline Boulevard off-ramp, this alternative would remove a total of 21 trees (16 Heritage and 5 non-Heritage trees), with 48 new 24" box trees required for mitigation. To avoid this additional tree removal, staff recommends proceeding with the original design.

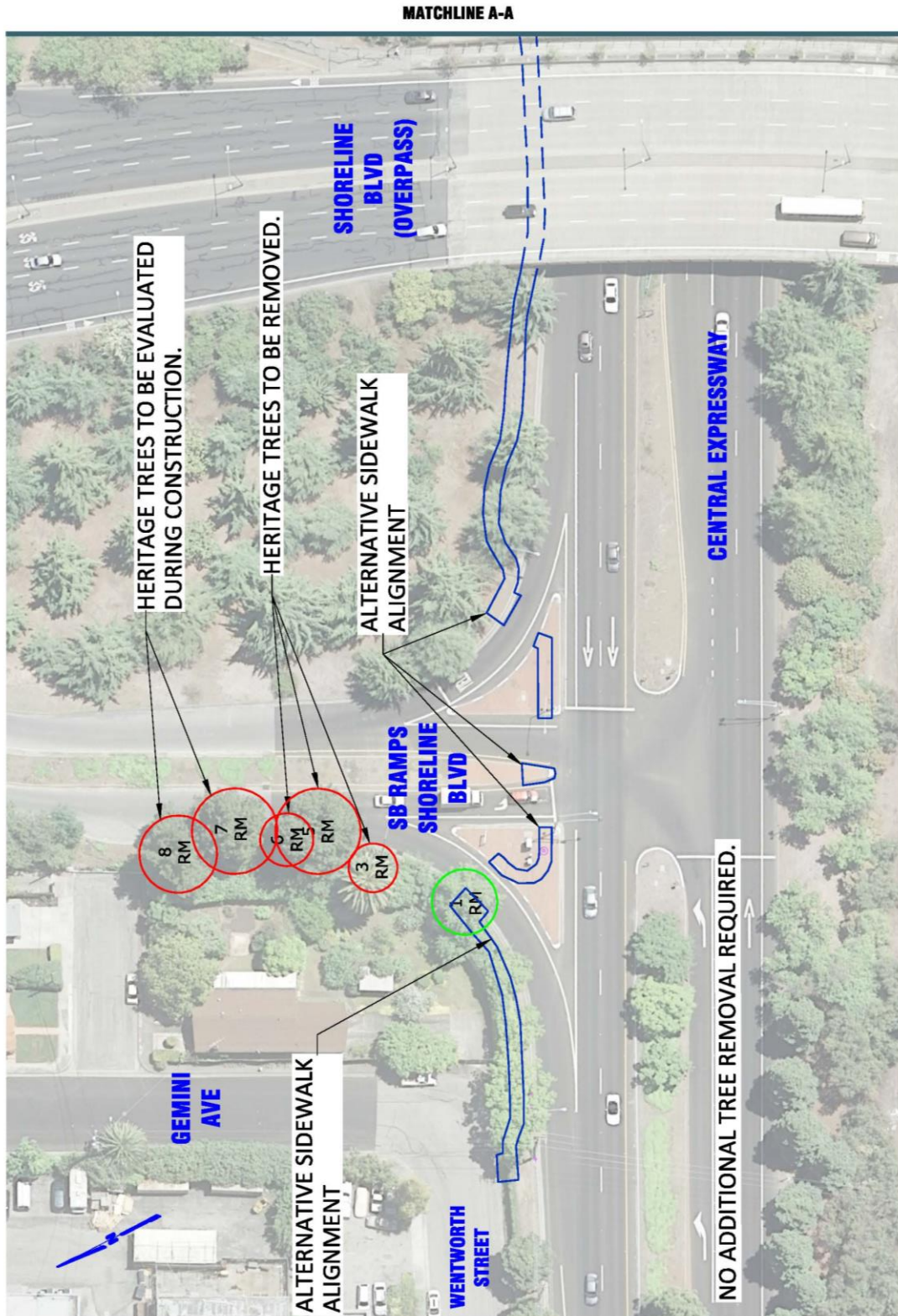


Exhibit J – Alternative Sidewalk Alignment and Tree Removal Locations

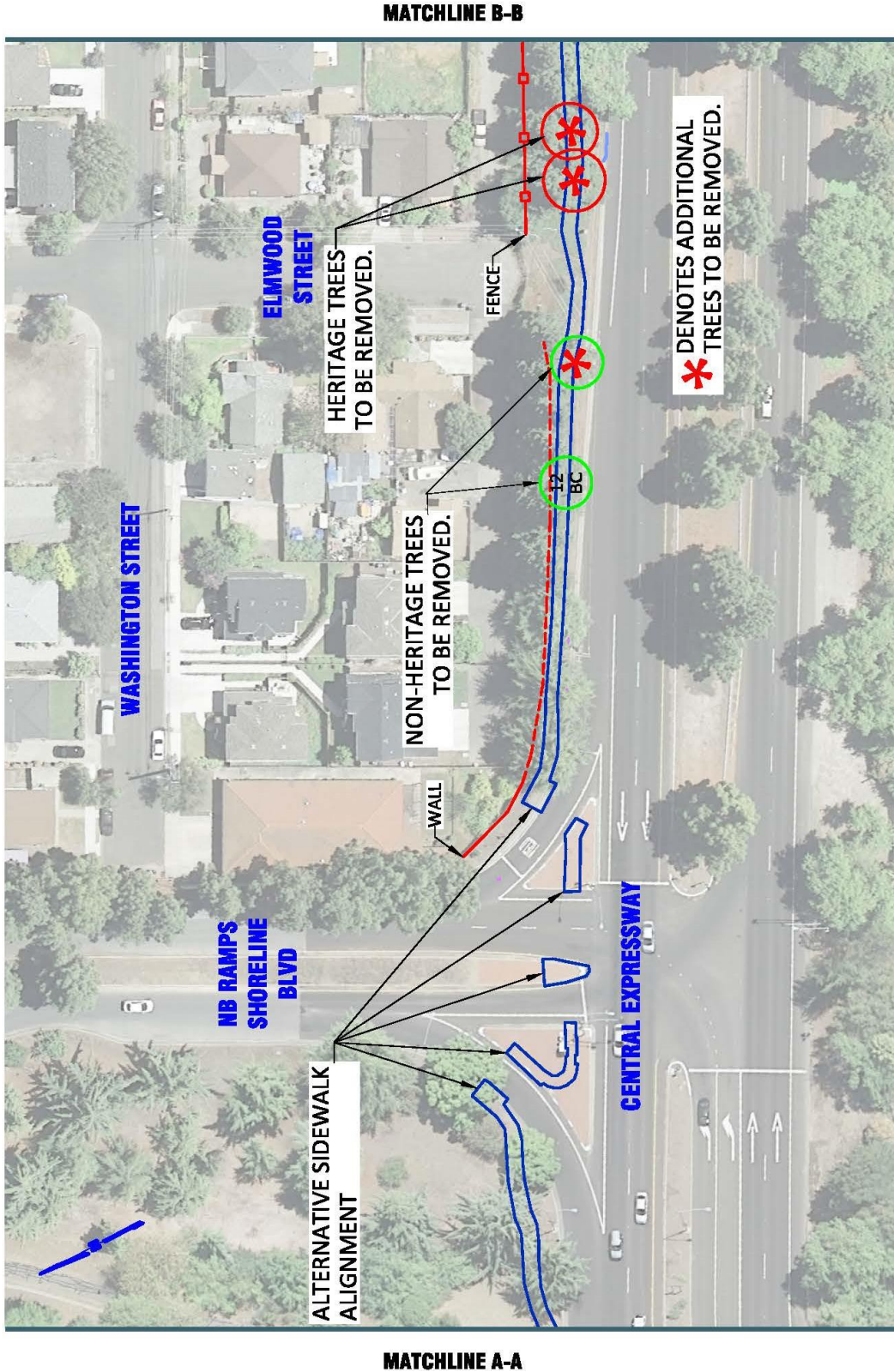


Exhibit K – Alternative Sidewalk Alignment and Tree Removal Locations

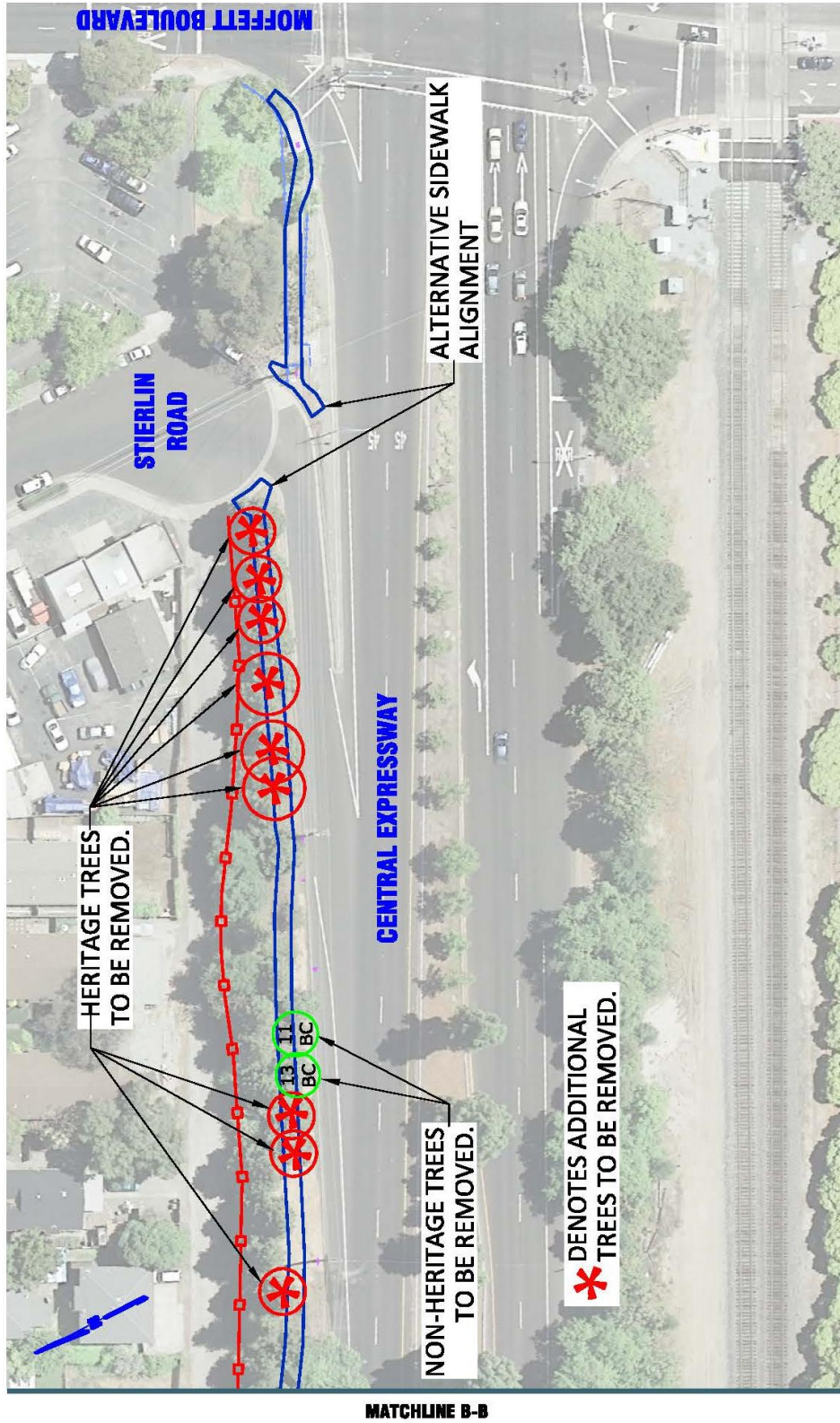


Exhibit L – Alternative Sidewalk Alignment and Tree Removal Locations

Another concern raised at the PRC meeting is the uncontrolled right turns onto and off of the Shoreline Boulevard ramps. The recommended design includes tree removal to create adequate sight distance, high-visibility crosswalks, and static signs warning motorists that pedestrians may be present. Speakers at the meeting suggested installation of raised crosswalks and flashing signs/beacons because uncontrolled right turns are not pedestrian friendly. Central Expressway is owned and operated by Santa Clara County, and County traffic engineering staff, citing the importance of maintaining uniformity along the Central Expressway corridor, supports the proposed design that includes static (nonflashing) signs and high-visibility crosswalks.

Speakers also suggested that lighting should be included as part of this project since the area has no pedestrian lighting. While lighting could be included, it was not part of the original scope and had an estimated cost of \$90,000. Lighting could be added as part of a separate project in the future. The existing sidewalk along Central Expressway is also not lighted.

A request was also made for a connection from the proposed sidewalk to the Shoreline Boulevard walkway. This connection was also not in the original project scope or budget. Staff is evaluating alternatives to improve this pathway as part of a future project, which could include this connection.

Mitigated Negative Declaration

An Initial Study was prepared for the staff-proposed project in accordance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines and staff filed a Notice of Intent to Adopt a Mitigated Negative Declaration with the Santa Clara County Clerk's Office. The Initial Study (Attachment 1) identified two potentially significant environmental impacts:

- **Biological Resources:** Since the Notice of Intent and the Initial Study were filed, the number of trees proposed for removal has decreased. Originally, 17 trees, of which 7 were Heritage trees, were proposed for removal. The project is currently proposing to remove up to 5 Heritage trees which conflict with the proposed sidewalk alignment and visibility issues at the intersection of Central Expressway and Shoreline Boulevard. To mitigate impacts, 15 mitigation trees will be planted as part of the project.
- **Greenhouse Gas Emissions:** Construction equipment will produce greenhouse gases. To mitigate impacts from construction-related greenhouse gas emissions,

Best Management Practices established by the Bay Area Air Quality Management District (BAAQMD) will be followed during construction.

With the identified mitigation measures, environmental impacts are expected to be less than significant.

The Initial Study and the proposed Mitigated Negative Declaration (Attachment 2) were made available for a 20-day public review period ending on January 24, 2014. A copy of the Initial Study and proposed Mitigated Negative Declaration were filed at the Santa Clara County Clerk's Office and made available on the City website. Notices of the proposed Mitigated Negative Declaration were also posted at the project site. No comments were received during the public review period.

Staff recommends Council adopt the Mitigated Negative Declaration of Environmental Impact for Central Expressway Sidewalk Improvements, Project 11-44.

Project Cost

The estimated project cost is as follows:

Construction	\$375,000
Construction Contingency	38,000
Consultant Design	98,000
City Project Management	35,000
Construction Inspection and Testing	20,000
Environmental Compliance/Permitting	11,000
Miscellaneous	<u>5,000</u>
Subtotal	582,000
City Administration @ 6.5%	<u>38,000</u>
TOTAL PROJECT COST	<u>\$620,000</u>

Schedule

Plans and specifications for the project are complete and available for viewing in the Public Works Department.

If Council approves the recommended actions, construction is expected to begin in April 2014 and be completed by June 2014.

FISCAL IMPACT

Central Expressway Sidewalk Improvements, Project 11-44, is funded with \$325,000 from the Construction/Conveyance Tax Fund, \$150,000 from the Santa Clara Road Fund, and \$150,000 from the Transportation Development Act (TDA) Article 3 grant, for a total of \$625,000. Sufficient funding is available to complete the project based on the current cost estimate.

CONCLUSION

The recommended project would close an existing gap in sidewalks on Central Expressway between Gemini Avenue and Moffett Boulevard/Castro Street. While not an ideal pedestrian environment due to the relatively high volume and speed of traffic, a sidewalk on Central Expressway provides a direct east-west option in this area for pedestrians. Heritage tree removal is required for the project as designed, and additional tree removal would be necessary to provide a larger buffer between pedestrians and the roadway. Lighting is not included in the current project scope, but could be added at a later date. Staff recommends Council adopt the Mitigated Negative Declaration of Environmental Impact and find that the Initial Study reflects the independent judgment of the City Council in accordance with CEQA; approve the removal of up to five Heritage trees and recommended mitigation replacement at a 3 to 1 ratio (a total of 15) with 24" box trees; approve plans and specifications and authorize staff to advertise the project for bids; and authorize the City Manager to award the construction contract to the lowest responsible bidder if the low bid is within the project budget.

ALTERNATIVES

1. Direct staff to redesign the project to increase the buffer between the proposed sidewalk and the roadway which will require 12 (11 Heritage and 1 non-Heritage) additional trees to be removed and 33 new trees to be planted as mitigation for removal of Heritage trees at a 3 to 1 ratio with 24" box trees.
2. Decline to approve the recommended Mitigated Negative Declaration and find that additional impacts exist or that additional mitigation is required.
3. Direct staff not to proceed with the project. Grant funding would need to be returned.

PUBLIC NOTICING

Agenda posting. Noticing for this meeting included an advertisement in the *Mountain View Voice* and an announcement on the City's website.

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Approved by:

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City Manager

JH/7/CAM
907-02-11-14CR-E-1

Attachments: 1. Initial Study
2. Mitigated Negative Declaration

cc: APWD – Solomon, PCE – Au, PCE – Macaraeg, ACE – Houghton, F(11-44)/c