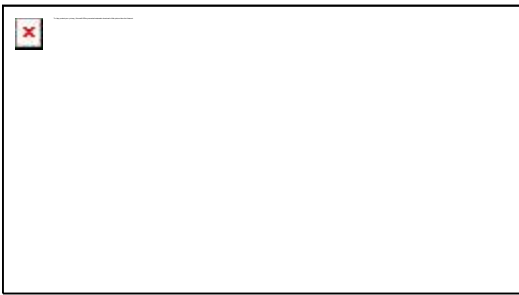

From: Bruce England
Sent: Monday, January 27, 2025 2:05 PM
To: City Council
Cc: Murdock, Christian; Marchant, John; Ng, Jennifer; McCarthy, Kimbra; , City Clerk
Subject: Re: 4.5 City Council Work Plan Process at City Council 1/258/25 meeting
Attachments: CC-City Council Work Plan Process-GreenSpacesMV-20250128.pdf

CAUTION: EXTERNAL EMAIL - Ensure you trust this email before clicking on any links or attachments.

(formal letter attached)



January 28, 2025

City of Mountain View City Council
City Hall, 500 Castro Street
PO Box 7540
Mountain View, CA 94039-7540

Re: 4.5 City Council Work Plan Process

Dear City Council members:

GreenSpacesMV would like to comment on this agenda item—4.5 City Council Work Plan Process—coming before you on this week’s consent calendar.

We appreciate all of the work Staff does on managing your work plan projects from year to year, and we acknowledge the difficulties in getting as much completed as you can over time; in particular, from our perspective, the work Staff and their consultants have done and are doing in response to strong community interest in protecting trees and wildlife in Mountain View.

That said, we are concerned that priorities we feel strongly about could get compromised or unduly delayed as a result of your intentions to reduce work scope. Although this item on your agenda is early in the process for you, we want to voice our concerns now so they can be considered and addressed as early as possible.

Priority projects for us include the following:

- **Parks and Recreation Strategic Plan:** Although this plan is well along in draft development, you won’t be considering it until September 2025, as we understand, and we do want to be sure resources to complete it are not reduced.

- **Biodiversity Strategy and Urban Forest Plan:** Similarly, this plan is running behind the Parks and Recreation Strategic Plan for development and completion, and we also do not want to see reductions in resources needed to continue work on it. Staff documentation indicates the following for this plan: “The Biodiversity and Urban Forest Plan has faced delays due to staffing challenges with the outreach consultant. Staff is working on revising the project timeline and developing an alternative outreach plan.”
- **Dark Skies Ordinances:** GreenSpacesMV and other organizations have advocated continuously since as early as 2021 for work to ensue on the this project. We do urge you to move this forward as soon as possible given it already exists as a Priority B in your Sustainability & Climate Resiliency focus area as adopted in 2023 (although we believe it should be set on a similar trajectory with the Biodiversity Strategy and Urban Forest Plan). However, Staff documentation indicates the following on plans for development of one or more of these ordinances: “Not yet started. Staff plans to begin this project in Q3 2024.” A time frame that is now passed.

Delays we're already seeing send an unfortunate message to the community that a sense of urgency is lacking at the City level. If this is something you seek to avoid or prevent, some acceleration in progress is called for. We do note that all of these are anticipated to be completed within the first six months of the FYs 2025-27 Work Plan, and we absolutely wish to see that assertion continue to hold.

In lieu of completion of the above plans and ordinances, we find that we need to advocate at the individual project level, whether those project are public or private, in the interest of keeping attention on protecting trees and establishing light reductions where we can in lieu of City rules setting bars against unreasonable or egregious practices. Please understand that this puts a burden on our ability to do our work effectively as we monitor and identify opportunities for us to comment at review meetings or via comment letters. In particular, we have taken stands many times against plans for tree removal and overlighting in locations across town. Lacking clear guidelines at this time, we encourage decision makers to anticipate new rules or guidelines, even though what will be in the plan and ordinances is lacking beyond what we hear from Staff and consultants on occasion. This is certainly suboptimal for us. Only when the plans and ordinances are adopted will all stakeholders be able to confidently know what to expect through all future and ongoing project planning. We would like to suggest that City Council establish moratoriums on further tree removals or lighting expansions until the plans and ordinances in question are completed and adopted.

Examples might be useful here to illustrate:

- 2249-2283, 2319-2325 and 2385 Old Middlefield Way and 775 Independence Avenue with proposed development by Magnussen's Middlefield LLC now subject to appeal. This project includes plans to remove trees and to potentially overlight the premises. Some tree removal mitigation has been discussed and direction provided to put timers on lighting in the upper deck location. We feel such measures fall short and would likely not be acceptable if generally-applicable direction were available. According to the Mountain View Voice in December: “The city approved the development at an administrative zoning hearing on Dec. 18, although the decision could be appealed to the City Council by Jan. 2.” However, there were no City Council meetings between those dates, which included the holidays closure, and so raises the question of whether City Council had a reasonable chance to weigh in on this project.
- The Shoreline Boulevard Interim Bus Lane and Utility Improvements project, which you last reviewed in 2021, and which included plans from 2019 to remove 16 Heritage trees (12 on North Shoreline Boulevard and 4 on West Middlefield Road). As you might recall, City Council received significant opposition to some or all of the tree removal plans.
- Multiple instances of reviews and appeals related to residential property owners seeking to remove trees from their properties. Without strong and clear restrictions or allowances, members of the community have regularly found themselves in potentially contentious exchanges among neighbors. This is not at all an ideal way to get things done in our city, as we're sure you agree.

Beyond City Council meetings, Staff calls out a process for Council Advisory Body participation stating that they plan to present to each body at their regular meetings in March or April 2025 including “seeking feedback about their perspective on the Strategic Priorities and Council’s potential project list.” Is every advisory body to

be included in this effort or only select ones? Presumably, the Staff liaisons for each body are aware of needing to plan their agendas for this.

Finally, in order to optimize representative and community input across the board, we request that Staff do all they can to provide materials in advance of public meetings by more than the standard 72 hours. In particular, when plans such as those discussed in this letter (along with others, such as the Active Transportation Plan) are subject to review and consideration, particular within community groups, having only a few days to do this can be unreasonable and unwieldy for all involved. This request seems fitting for the Staff-expressed concept of “quality over quantity”.

With all in this letter said, we anticipate future meetings where we could have additional comments to offer, or to emphasize those made here. Specifically:

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Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,
Bruce England for GreenSpacesMV

Cc:
Christian Murdock, Community Development Director
John R. Marchant, Community Services Director
Jennifer Ng, Public Works Director
Kimbra McCarthy, City Manager
Heather Glaser, City Clerk

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