



COUNCIL REPORT

DATE:	December 16, 2025
CATEGORY:	Consent
DEPT.:	Public Works
TITLE:	Heritage Tree Removal and Mitigation at the Senior Center for the Solar Arrays at the Mountain View Senior Center, Mountain View Sports Pavilion, and Whisman Sports Center, Project 24-48

RECOMMENDATION

Approve the removal and mitigation of one Heritage tree at a 2:1 tree replacement ratio, with 24" box trees at the Senior Center for the Solar Arrays at the Mountain View Senior Center, Mountain View Sports Pavilion, and Whisman Sports Center, Project 24-48.

BACKGROUND

In April 2023, the City applied for the Net Energy Metering (NEM) 2.0 program to reserve incentives to install photovoltaic or solar array systems at various public facilities, including the Mountain View Senior Center, Mountain View Sports Pavilion, and Whisman Sports Center. The NEM program is administered by the California Public Utilities Commission and provides credits to a building's utility bill for producing excess on-site clean energy over a 20-year period. The deadline to submit projects under NEM 2.0 was April 14, 2023, which the City met. These projects help reduce greenhouse gas emissions and have significant energy cost-saving benefits. In addition to payback from the utility savings, the Federal Investment Tax Credit program (known as Direct Pay) can cover \$1,527,418 of the project costs after completion. The utility savings realized over 20 years, along with project costs, are shown in Table 1. NEM 2.0 projects must be operational by March 2026 to be eligible for the incentive.

Additionally, the three projects are eligible for the Energy Conservation Contracting process, as authorized in California Government Code Section 4217.12. This streamlined process allows public agencies to select a qualified energy services contractor for both design and construction, allowing for a design-build contract. This contracting process was created by the State to encourage energy efficiency within existing public facilities by allowing public agencies to use the ensuing energy savings as an alternative funding source to finance infrastructure upgrades that were deemed a net benefit and cost-effective.

Table 1: Project Costs and Savings

Facility	Total Project Cost After Incentive	Utility Savings Over 20 Years
Senior Center	\$2,369,662	\$5,957,062
Whisman Sports Center	513,971	1,363,830
Mountain View Sports Pavilion	1,533,752	2,545,147
TOTAL	\$4,417,385	\$9,866,039

The Senior Center is owned and operated by the City. The Mountain View Sports Pavilion and Whisman Sports Center are jointly owned by the City and the Mountain View Whisman School District (School District). The gymnasiums are maintained by the City under the following agreements:

- Whisman Sports Center at Crittenden Middle School: Agreement for the Mutual Construction, Ownership, Maintenance, and Operation of a Sports Center (1992).
- Mountain View Sports Pavilion at Graham Middle School: Joint Ownership and Use Agreement, Graham School Gymnasium (1984) and Maintenance Agreement Between the City of Mountain View and the Mountain View Whisman School District (Graham Middle School), County of Santa Clara, State of California, for Joint Use of Graham Middle School for Park and Recreation Purposes and Maintenance of the Mountain View Sports Pavilion (2003).

The above agreements require joint decisions on enhancements and upgrades, such as installing solar arrays. On April 18, 2024, the School Board directed School District staff to work with City staff to install the solar array projects at the gymnasiums.

On [June 25, 2024](#), the City Council adopted a Resolution with the following actions:

1. Approved a Midyear Capital Improvement Program Project: Solar Arrays at the Mountain View Senior Center, Mountain View Sports Pavilion, and Whisman Sports Center;
2. Transferred and Appropriated \$750,000 to Fund the Project;

3. Awarded an Energy Services Contract to Syserco Energy Solutions, Inc., for the Design and Installation of Solar Arrays at the Project Sites for a Total Amount Not to Exceed \$5,944,803;
4. Found that the Project Collectively and Each Project Site Individually, met the Requirements of California Government Code Section 4217.12; and
5. Found that the Project is Categorically Exempt as Class 1, Existing Facilities Under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines Section 15301 and on a Separate and Independent Basis is Exempt as Class 3, Construction of Small Structures, Under CEQA Guidelines Section 15301.

Mountain View Senior Center

The preliminary conceptual design included installation of solar arrays on the Senior Center's rooftop and new carports in the parking lot (Figure 1). Preliminary analysis estimated up to seven non-Heritage trees would need to be removed and Council was advised at the June 25, 2024 meeting that the project mitigation measures would be at a 1:1 tree replacement ratio with 24" box trees, either on- or off-site.

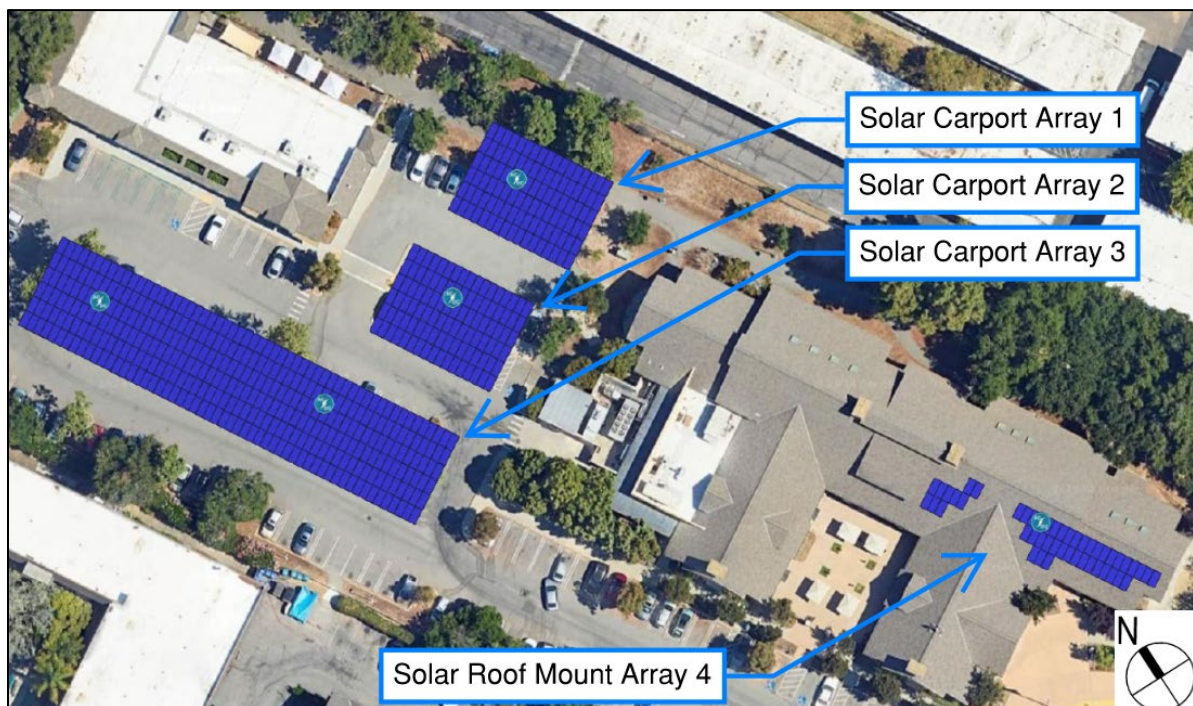


Figure 1: Senior Center Solar Arrays

Mountain View Sports Pavilion

Similarly, for the Mountain View Sports Pavilion, the preliminary conceptual design included installation of solar arrays on the Sports Pavilion's rooftop and new carports in the parking lot (Figure 2). Preliminary analysis estimated up to seven non-Heritage trees would need to be removed and Council was advised at the June 25, 2024, meeting that the project mitigation measures would be at a 1:1 tree replacement ratio with 24" box trees, either on- or off-site.



Figure 2: Mountain View Sports Pavilion Sports Center – Preliminary Design

Whisman Sports Center

The Whisman Sports Center will have only rooftop solar arrays and does not require any tree removals (see Figure 3).

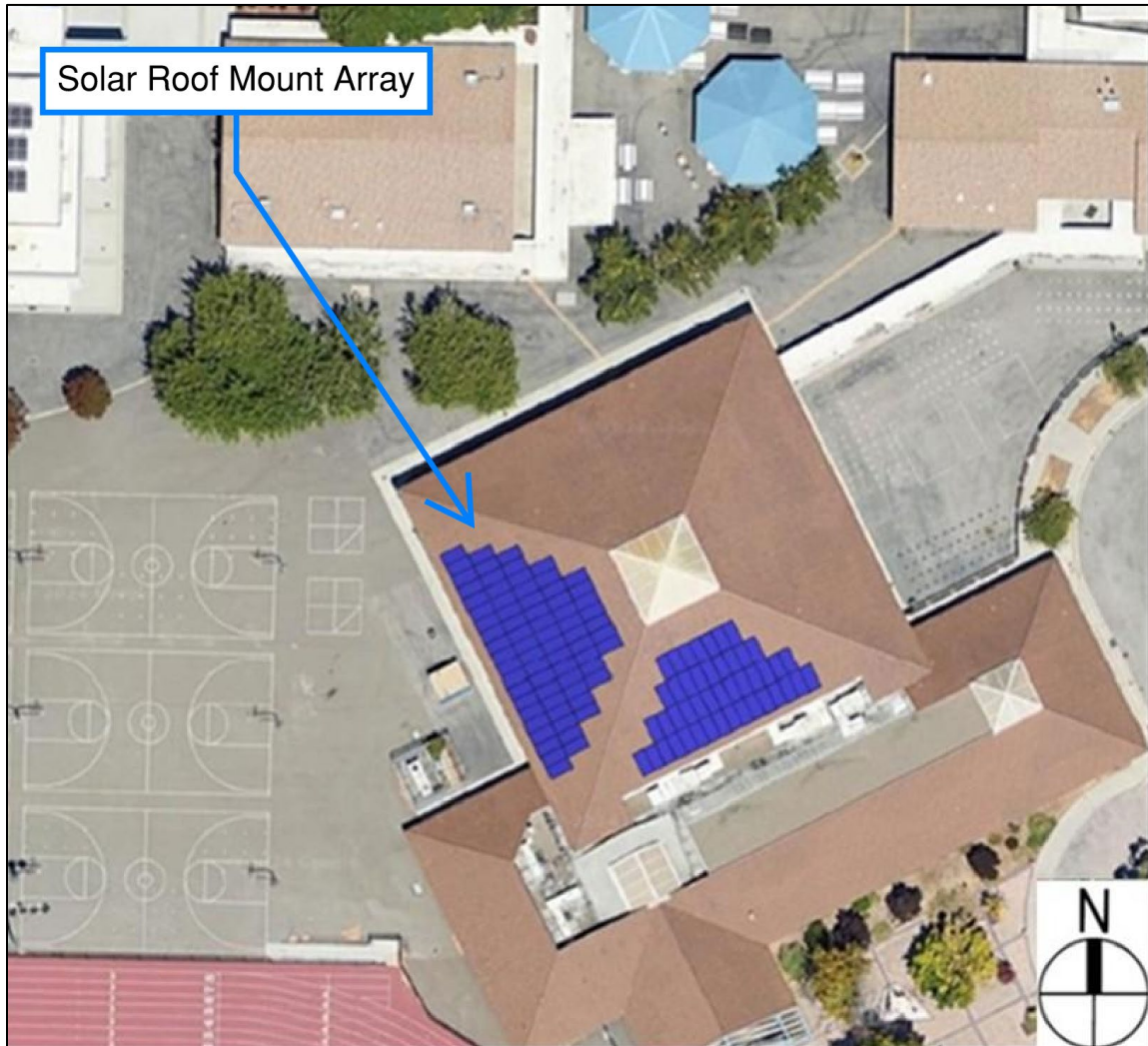


Figure 3: Whisman Sports Center

ANALYSIS

Project Scope and Status

Senior Center

The design for the Senior Center solar arrays was finalized in August 2025, and a permit has been issued by the City's Building Division. During the design phase, higher efficiency solar panels were incorporated on the solar carports, which reduced the total number of panels necessary to generate the required energy production. This reduced the solar arrays from 586 panels on the preliminary design to 558 on the final design.

The construction of the Senior Center solar arrays is being implemented in two phases, with the latter phase tightly coordinated with another project (Senior Center Electrification Project 22-34) that will impact the Senior Nutrition program. By overlapping the construction of these two projects on the same site, staff is seeking to minimize impacts to the Senior Nutrition program. Furthermore, construction and activation of the arrays must be completed on this site by March 2026, to meet the PG&E NEM 2.0 deadline to retain the incentive and to be grandfathered into more financially favorable compensation rates for up to 20 years.

The first phase of the Senior Center carports installation (the foundations) was completed on September 1, 2025 (Labor Day Weekend). During this construction phase, the Senior Center Nutrition Program was temporarily relocated to the Mountain View Community Center, utilizing catering services. The second phase of the solar array construction is scheduled to begin in January 2026.

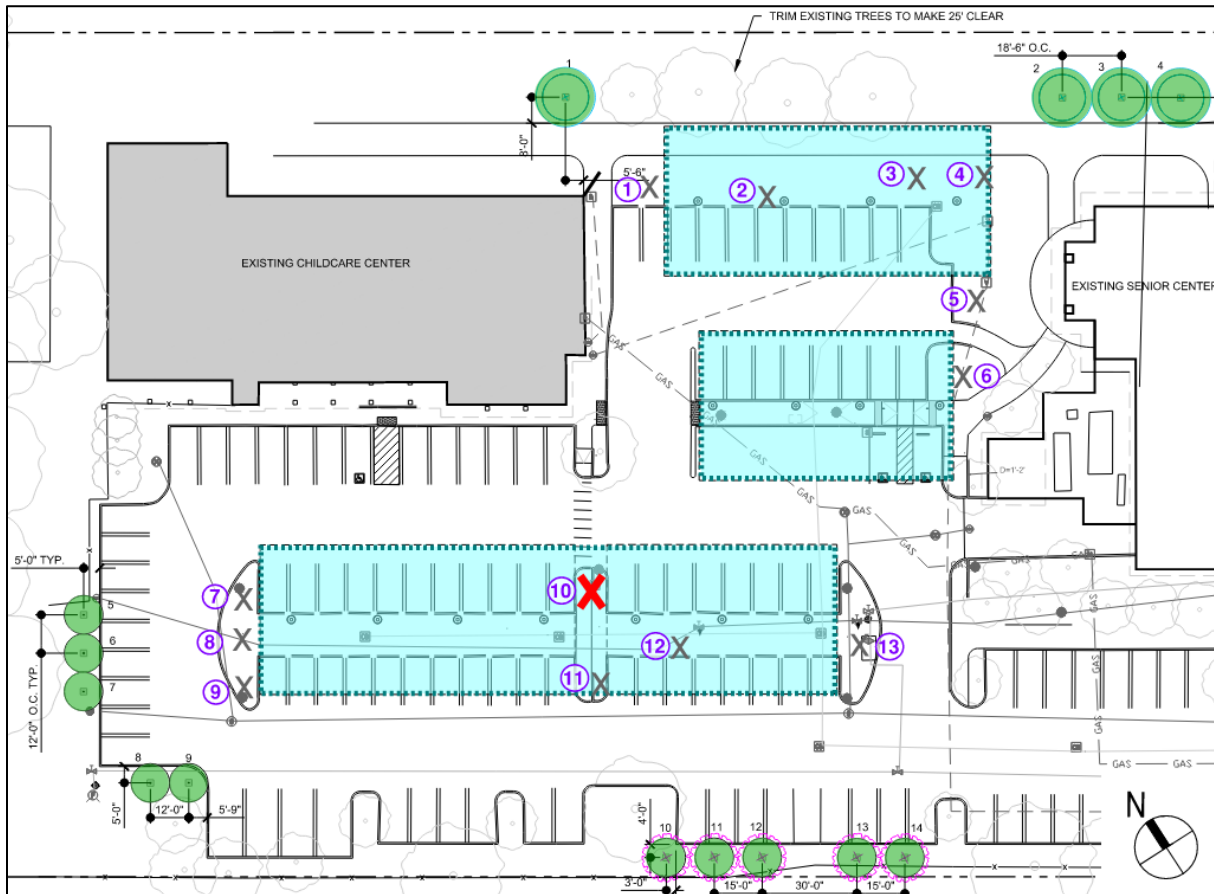
Senior Center Tree Removals

As part of the project, existing trees are required to be removed to accommodate the installation of the solar arrays. When Council approved the creation of the solar project in June 2024, Council was informed that up to seven non-heritage trees would need to be removed to accommodate the solar carport installation. With the progression of final design development, one tree was identified as a Heritage tree. This Heritage tree was initially classified as non-Heritage during the preliminary tree impact assessment but was later confirmed to meet the heritage criteria.

The design completion and more detailed final tree survey further revealed that seven additional trees located outside the immediate solar carport footprint also need to be removed due to branches physically conflicting with the proposed solar panels and tree canopy obstructing the system's energy generation capacity. A reduction in the solar generation capacity from these

additional trees compromises the energy savings needed to accomplish the project's payback goals.

In total, 13 trees within the Senior Center project site will require removal. The trees recommended for removal consist of 12 non-Heritage trees and one Heritage tree (see Figure 4).



Legend





- | | | | |
|---|---------------------------------|---|-----------------------------|
|  | New tree to be installed |  | Heritage tree to be removed |
|  | Non-Heritage tree to be removed |  | Solar carport |

Figure 4: Senior Center Removal and New Tree Location Plan

Alternative design options were evaluated to minimize tree impacts, including expanding rooftop solar installations. However, the geometry and orientation of the Senior Center roof do not

support sufficient panel coverage and energy generation to replace or substantially reduce the need for the carport-mounted solar arrays. Furthermore, a separate, concurrently approved project will install solar thermal panels on the roof for domestic water heating, further limiting available rooftop space for photovoltaic panels.

Tree trimming was also evaluated in lieu of removal, but the amount of trimming needed would be at significant expense to the health of the trees.

The arborist and City staff evaluated the trees to be removed for potential transplant and recommended replacement over transplant for all of the impacted trees. Factors considered by the arborist included species suitability, size, health, site conditions, and characteristics of the transplanting site. No trees within the project area were found to be optimal candidates for transplanting. Therefore, planting new trees as a mitigation measure is recommended over transplanting trees.

The 12 non-Heritage trees will be replaced at a 1:1 ratio with 24" box trees, and staff recommends the one Heritage tree be replaced at a 2:1 ratio with 24" box trees. This results in 14 new trees, as shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Tree Planting Schedule – Senior Center

Quantity	Botanical Name	Common Name	Box Size
5	<i>Cercis occidentalis</i>	Western Redbud	24"
4	<i>Platanus racemosa</i>	Western Sycamore	24"
5	<i>Acer × freemanii</i> 'Armstrong'	Armstrong maple	24"

Urban Forestry Board

On [November 12, 2025](#), the project was presented to the Urban Forestry Board (UFB), where they reviewed the landscaping plan, identifying tree removals, replacement trees, and their respective planting locations (see Figure 4). The UFB recommended Council approve the staff recommendation to mitigate the removal of one Heritage tree at a 2:1 replacement ratio with 24" box trees within the project site.

Mountain View Sports Pavilion and Whisman Sports Center

The design for the Mountain View Sports Pavilion solar carport array was completed in May 2025, and a permit has been issued by the State of California, Division of the State Architect, which has

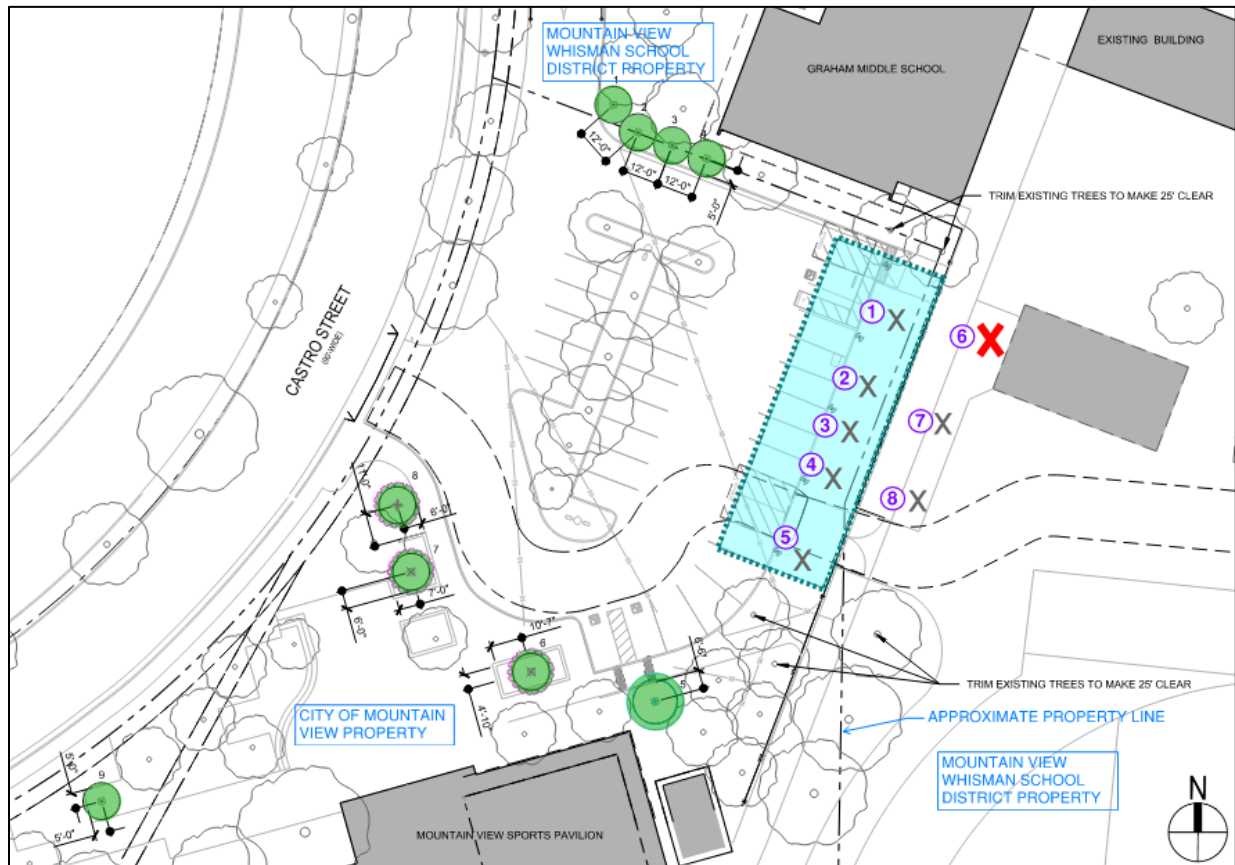
prevailing jurisdiction on school sites. The designs for the Mountain View Sports Pavilion and the Whisman Sports Center solar roof arrays were completed in September 2025, and both are currently undergoing plan review by the Division of the State Architect. Permit issuance for these sites is estimated for December 2025.

Construction on the Mountain View Sports Pavilion solar carport is scheduled to begin in December 2025. Construction on the roof arrays at both the Mountain View Sports Pavilion and Whisman Sports Center are planned to begin in early 2026. Construction and activation of the arrays must also be completed on these sites by March 2026, to meet the PG&E NEM 2.0 deadline.

Mountain View Sports Pavilion Site

As noted to Council in the June 2024 report, five non-heritage trees would be impacted by being underneath the carport solar arrays. After finalizing the design, three additional trees (one Heritage and two non-Heritage trees) were identified adjacent to the solar arrays to cause significant shading, thereby reducing energy production as well as branch conflicts with the arrays.

In total, eight trees within the Sports Pavilion project site will require removal. The trees recommended for removal consist of seven non-Heritage trees and one Heritage tree (see Figure 5).



Legend





- | | | | |
|---|---------------------------------|---|-----------------------------|
|  | New tree to be installed |  | Heritage tree to be removed |
|  | Non-Heritage tree to be removed |  | Solar carport |

Figure 5: Mountain View Sports Pavilion Site

The Heritage tree at the MVSP site is not subject to the Heritage tree ordinance as it is located on School District property, which is under the jurisdiction of the State of California, Division of the State Architect. While the project involves both City and School District joint-owners, the one Heritage tree removal is exclusively on the School District property and is outside the footprint of the solar canopy. The School District approved the removal of this Heritage tree so that it does not shade the solar arrays and affect the energy production.

The School District also agreed with a mitigation plan to plant nine 24" box trees on the Mountain View Sports Pavilion site as part of the mitigation measures (see Table 3). There is suitable space available to plant all proposed replacement trees within the site (see Figure 5).

The arborist and City staff evaluated the trees to be removed for potential transplant and recommended replacement over transplant for all of the impacted trees. Factors considered by the arborist included species suitability, size, health, site conditions, and characteristics of the transplanting site. No trees within the project area were identified as optimal candidates for transplanting. Therefore, planting new trees as a mitigation measure is recommended over transplanting trees.

The seven non-Heritage trees will be replaced at a 1:1 ratio with 24" box trees, and the one Heritage tree be replaced at a 2:1 ratio with 24" box trees. This results in nine new trees, as shown in Table 3.

Table 3: Tree Planting Schedule – Mountain View Sports Pavilion

Quantity	Botanical Name	Common Name	Box Size
5	Cercis occidentalis	Western Redbud	24"
3	Chilopsis linearis	Desert Willow	24"
1	Sequoia sempervirens 'Aptos Blue'	Aptos Blue Coast Redwood	24"

Whisman Sports Center Site

The Whisman Sports Center will have only rooftop solar arrays and does not require any tree removals.

FISCAL IMPACT

Solar Arrays – Senior Center, Mountain View Sports Pavilion, and Whisman Sports Center, Project 24-48, is currently funded as follows:

Table 4: Funding Sources

Funding Source	Amount
Park Land Dedication Fund	\$ 4,500,000
Other Reserves	1,600,000
Construction/Conveyance Tax Fund	1,065,000
General Non-Operating Fund	250,000
Whisman School District	163,000
Total	<u>\$ 7,578,000</u>

A total of \$1,527,418 from the Federal Direct Pay program would be reimbursed to the City after project completion. The expected utility savings over 20 years will be nearly 10 million dollars.

Tree removals and mitigation for the trees is funded from the current project budget. There is sufficient funding in the project budget for the recommended action. No additional appropriation is requested at this time.

LEVINE ACT

California Government Code Section 84308 (also known as the Levine Act) prohibits city officials from participating in any proceeding involving a “license, permit, or other entitlement for use” if the official has received a campaign contribution exceeding \$500 from a party, participant, or agent of a party or participant within the last 12 months. The Levine Act is intended to prevent financial influence on decisions that affect specific, identifiable persons or participants. For more information see the Fair Political Practices Commission website: www.fppc.ca.gov/learn/pay-to-play-limits-and-prohibitions.html

Please see below for information about whether the recommended action for this agenda item is subject to or exempt from the Levine Act.

EXEMPT FROM THE LEVINE ACT

☒ General policy and legislative actions

CONCLUSION

The design for the Solar Arrays at the Mountain View Senior Center, Mountain View Sports Pavilion, and Whisman Sports Center, Project 24-48, has been completed. The project will construct solar arrays at three sites that will yield significant energy savings over the next 20 years. One Heritage tree requires removal at the Mountain View Senior Center site, and staff recommends tree mitigation at a 2:1 ratio with two 24” box trees. In addition, 12 non-Heritage trees will be removed due to conflicts with the solar arrays, and will be replaced at a 1:1 replacement ratio with 24” box trees. Removal of the Heritage tree requires Council approval.

For the Mountain View Whisman School District sites, one Heritage tree requires removal at Mountain View Sports Pavilion, and staff recommends tree mitigation at a 2:1 ratio with 24” box trees. In addition, seven non-Heritage trees will be removed due to conflicts with the solar arrays, and will be replaced at a 1:1 ratio with 24” box trees. The Heritage tree at the MVSP site is not subject to the Heritage tree ordinance as it is located on School District property. Therefore, Council approval is not required. The solar arrays project at Whisman Sports Center has no impact on trees.

If Council approves the recommended action for the removal of the Heritage tree at the Mountain View Senior Center, construction is anticipated to begin in December 2025 and be completed by March 2026.

ALTERNATIVES

1. Do not approve the removal and mitigation of one Heritage tree at a 2:1 replacement ratio with 24" box trees, and direct staff to provide a different replacement ratio or tree size.
2. Provide other direction.

PUBLIC NOTICING

In addition to the standard agenda posting, staff posted a notice on the tree identifying it for removal from August 20 to August 29, 2026, and no appeals were received. Staff posted another notice on the tree identifying it for removal from October 22 to November 12, 2025. Notices regarding the recommended heritage tree mitigation plan were mailed to occupants and property owners within 1,000 feet of the Senior Center and Mountain View Sports Pavilion project sites.

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