

*Nov 10, 2021*

***“Adults keep saying, ‘We owe it to the young people to give them hope’ But I don’t want your hope. I don’t want you to be hopeful. I want you to panic. I want you to feel the fear I feel every day. And then I want you to act...I want you to act as if your house is on fire. Because it is.”***

***Greta Thunberg***

Dear Members of the Design Review Board,

I am writing to you from an environmental and ethical point of view, regarding the very significant impact that would be caused by the loss of the 9 redwood trees living on the land at 52-54 Fremont Rd.

I ask you now the question Joanna Macy PhD, author, teacher, scholar of Buddhism, systems thinking and deep ecology asks of us. **“How do you become a beloved ancestor?”**

We are looking into a very different future than most would have imagined 30 years ago. And we now recognize too late that the century-long disregard of Mother Earth has caught up with us, bringing us to the brink of Climate Disaster, Chaos and Crisis. So knowing this, where you draw a line in the sand? **Because what you decide here matters.** It matters to the trees. It matters to the animals, birds and insects that live in and on the trees. It matters to our neighborhood. It matters to our city. It matters to our planet. And most of all it matters to our children and our future generations.

The city needs to adhere to its General Plan 2040 and to the Climate Action Plan that it has developed. The time is now (it actually was a long time ago, but now we cannot put it off any longer) we have to, as it is said “Do The Right Thing” every time a significant decision comes up.

The Redwood is the King of Trees and it is our official state tree. We are so blessed to live here where they grow. These trees are older than any of you- about 100-120 years old. They are around 90-100 feet tall or more and have circumferences greater than you can wrap your arms around when you hug them. (diameters of 9.5”, 17.0”, 18.8”, 19.5”, 19.8”, 23.2”, 26.3”, 35.3”, and 37.3”) There is a network of roots that all of those redwoods share that stabilizes them as a whole family unit and the hill that they live on. If you allow some of those redwoods to be cut down, you will very likely destroy the network for the remaining ones and destroy the hillside’s integrity as well.

Just because San Rafael hasn’t gotten around to placing an ordinance that would protect these trees, they are none-the-less significant and heritage trees and should be protected. How can San Rafael justify calling itself a Tree City, when it would consider cutting down 9 healthy, mature, beneficial Redwood trees? What a paradox, that San Rafael prides itself because it just planted 100 new, young trees and then it would even consider cutting down these 9 elder redwoods. My question is...Why is this even being discussed? These trees are on the county list of Protected, Significant and Heritage trees, why are they not protected in San Rafael?

And regarding mitigation: There are no trees, and not even newly planted young redwoods that are of equal value or greater to these existing trees. Nor is there a fee that could equal their value. The city needs to adhere to the General Plan 2040 and to the Climate Action Plan that it has developed.

We residents have a petition against cutting these trees down created for local residents of San Rafael that now is currently 206 signatures (and growing) and there are 362 signatures of Marin Co residents included in our petition.

Also, I started a petition on Change.org called "Save Our Neighborhood Redwoods".

<https://www.change.org/p/city-of-san-rafael-help-save-our-neighborhood-redwoods>

I have over 579 signatures so far (and growing daily). It includes people from San Rafael, Marin, California, around the US and from people in Ireland, UK, Luxembourg, Belgium, France, Germany, Spain, Switzerland, Austria, Netherlands, Finland, Italy, Hungary, Poland, Croatia, Russia, Brazil, Argentina, Chile, Mexico, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Iran, Japan, Malaysia and Indonesia. Locally and all around the world people are concerned and watching to see what San Rafael is going to decide about these redwood trees. The whole world is watching you City of San Rafael. How does the City of San Rafael want its reputation to be to be seen?

So I ask you to..."Imagine the most perfect tree on Earth: one that outdoes all others in magnificence, size, height, productivity, architecture and ability to draw thousands of gallons of water, yet marvelously resists drought, fire, insects, disease, mudslides, flooding and wind; and it possesses exquisite biodiversity in its crown. Then, and only then, as naturalist and Sierra Club Founder John Muir put it, you'd know the "Kings of the forest, the noblest of a noble race" - the immortal Sequoia sempervirens, otherwise known as the coast redwood." Dr Reese Halter And John Muir also said..."God (\*Mother Earth) has cared for these trees, saved them from drought, disease, avalanches, and a thousand tempests and floods. But (\*s)he cannot save them from fools." (\* and my edits)

These majestic giants benefit the whole web of life. "They help mitigate Climate Disaster. Studies show that coast redwoods capture more carbon dioxide (CO2) from our cars, trucks, and power plants than any other tree on Earth. A typical tree will sequester about 1 ton of carbon in its lifetime. A coast redwood will sequester 250 tons of carbon. Just one coast redwood has the ability to absorb as much carbon as 250 "regular" trees. When redwoods are cut down, burned, or degraded by human actions, they release much of their stored carbon back into the atmosphere. And, they can no longer transform CO2 into the oxygen we breathe. This is a double-whammy for the growing imbalance in the world's carbon cycle and the climate's stability."

So between the latest IPCC's alarming warning on the state of our planet, The City of San Rafael's Climate Emergency Declaration, The General Plan and the Sustainability Action Plan, I ask you, why would you even considering cutting down these 9 beautiful, healthy, mature, beneficial and beloved in our neighborhood Redwood trees? Why would you put the desires of two non-resident financiers out to make a private profit over the city's Climate Action Plan and your San Rafael residents that live in this neighborhood? Because this house doesn't improve the housing stock, no low or middle income person could ever afford it, it is only for the wealthy.

The people who sit on San Rafael city boards are in a position of making decisions that greatly affect the residents of the city. We are asking you to listen to the residents you represent and to do the right thing for us, for the city and for the future, because our/your children and grandchildren will be asking you, "Why didn't you do the right thing when you had the chance?"

Thank you for your time and consideration,

Susan Bradford, San Rafael

*They took all the trees  
And put them in a tree museum.  
And they charged all the people  
a dollar and a half just to see 'em.  
Don't it always seem to go  
that you don't know what you've got  
till it's gone.  
They paved paradise  
And put up a \*McMansion."*

*Big Yellow Taxi by Joni Mitchell 1970*

***From the film "Kiss The Earth"... "We are all in this together. Every action that we take affects every other action like a ripple in a pond. So what decision are you going to make that will make a positive impact on this beautiful planet so that our grand children, the seven generations in the future can actually go up and hug a redwood tree...And what is it that we can do so that our children can flourish in the abundance that we have created by our decisions?"***