

February 7, 2022

Honorable Mayor Kate Colin and City Council members
City of San Rafael
1400 Fifth Ave. Room 203
San Rafael, CA 94901

RE: Agenda item #8.a. Third Street Rehabilitation Project

Honorable Mayor Kate Colin and City Council members:

I would like to comment on the 4 letters from businesses and landlords who oppose saving the London Plane tree:

1. Charles C. Pierce, Inc. -

- Parked cars in front of the Pierce Realty Office building force pedestrians into the street so I am glad that the City is providing a safe pathway for pedestrians to walk along this section of Second Street.
- Since COVID, businesses no longer have in-person meetings, with many meetings being held virtually. This trend will likely continue, reducing the need for customer parking.
- Elimination of 1 or 2 spaces near Marquard (to save the tree) are too far from Pierce Realty to have an impact on this business.
- I agree that the traffic is moving too fast down Second Street. Once, I was nearly hit as I ran across East Street in front of a stopped van who was pushed into the crosswalk by a speeding pick-up. All measures to slow traffic should be implemented, including lowering the speed limit, timing the traffic lights, shortening lane mergers, narrowing traffic lanes and visual cues, such as attractive signage and mature landscaping, emphasizing the entrance into a neighborhood.
- This section of Second Street should be more like a promenade and less like a freeway. The design of this roadway needs to calm traffic and reduce speed. There needs to be a distinct change in feel and pace as traffic enters 2nd/3rd/4th Street from the Miracle Mile. The large London Plane contributes to this calming effect and signals the entrance to a neighborhood.

2. Dilena Properties -

Dilena Properties, located in Hillsborough, owns and manages the West End Center, a retail strip between Fourth and Second Streets. Their letter states that removal of street parking will “increase stress on an already overstressed parking situation in our private parking lot” which contradicts their website which states that the West End Shopping Center “offers ample off-street parking.”
(www.dilena.org)

3. Roger Pierce -

He owns 4 rental properties in the area, 3 contiguous properties on Second Street and one on West Street. The small house on West Street has a one-car garage and a driveway that can easily accommodate 2 additional cars, parked in tandem. According to the Marin Assessors office, 2 of his 3 properties on Second Street have garages, one with 380 sq' and the other with 1,253 sq'. However, it appears that one of these properties converted the garage into living space.

4. Sandra Ponak and Angel Rodriguez -

Sandra and Angel live at the east end of Jessup Street and will benefit from the additional parking space added on Second between East and Ida, the street parking closest to their home.

All of the properties mentioned in these 4 letters have on-site parking. For those expressing concern about there being enough street parking for local businesses, I suggest they meet with City officials to discuss policy changes made after the recession to remove the requirement that new businesses provide parking. For example, the approval of Pond Farm Brewery without requiring any parking.

We are asking that you save one tree out of the four slated for removal. This is a fair compromise with the businesses and landlords that have voiced their opposition. As Charles Pierce stated in his letter: "as electric bicycles become more affordable, many people will be using the bicycle lane to get around." I totally agree. Isn't one of the goals of adding bicycle lanes in the City to reduce our dependence on the automobile? Once the bike path is finished, landlords may attract tenants that use bikes rather than cars to get around.

We will not see a young tree reach the stature of this London Plane in our lifetime. Mature trees provide character to our neighborhoods, soften the concrete infrastructure around us, and provide calm during stressful times. ***Please save this beautiful tree!***

Sincerely,

Victoria DeWitt
West End resident