



January 18, 2022

To: Sunnyvale Arts Commission
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Re: Item 3 on the January 19th agenda

Dear Chair Eskridge and Members of Sunnyvale's Arts Commission,

The Sierra Club Loma Prieta Chapter, the Santa Clara Valley Audubon Society, the Citizens Committee to Complete the Refuge, Green Foothills and the California Native Plant Society Santa Clara Valley Chapter provide the following comments on the proposed Google Caribbean art project. We represent environmental organizations that focus on land use, resilience in the face of sea level rise, climate change and biodiversity, the protection and enhancement of plant and wildlife habitats, and the education and enjoyment of nature by our members and the public. **We ask that you deny the lighting of the proposed art installations at Google Caribbean (300 Caribbean Drive).**

Our organizations supported the Google Caribbean Project during its entitlement process, and we are surprised and disappointed by the proposed lighting of art at 300 Caribbean. We are also surprised that such an ecologically harmful art project is recommended in Moffett Park, an area proposed to be developed as an Eco-District and where the community highlighted its

interest in promoting urban ecology to support biodiversity as a founding principle. Lighting as proposed is incompatible with a healthy environment where biodiversity may thrive.

Biodiversity at Moffett Park: **This beautiful large nocturnal Polyphemus moth (*Antheraea polyphemus*) was found at Moffett Park, 2017.** It is named for the large translucent eyespots on its wings, a reminder of the Greek myth of the Cyclops, Polyphemus.

The Moffett Park Specific Plan outlines seven guiding principles, including “Create a healthy, resilient, and biodiverse environment.” This includes “designing new developments and open spaces that would enhance ecosystems and support biodiversity and providing open spaces and natural buffers around ecological resources to restore biological function and habitat quality.”¹ We believe that the proposed light installation on Caribbean Drive directly contradicts this guiding principle.



The Moffett Park Specific Plan community visioning survey (2020) most popular key priorities included, “Support urban ecology to enhance biodiversity.”² This received more than 50% of the votes and “Connect people and nature to the Bay” received almost 70% of the votes. An art project that harms nature is not what the community envisioned.

Artificial Light At Night (ALAN), especially blue light, is a powerful biological disruptor and harmful to all organisms and ecosystems. We are all familiar with the idiom “like a moth to a flame,” and with blue-light bug zappers that attract insects to their demise. Empirical and recent science implicate ALAN as one of the primary drivers of the global decline in insect numbers and diversity.³ Light also modifies hormonal cues in plants and animals, and thus disrupts harmonies and timing of biological phenomena such as breeding cycles and migration, as well as ecological interactions among species, such as pollination.

There are places in the urban environment where light may be celebrated. However, we must understand the ecological and health dangers involved in using ALAN and learn how to use lighting in ways that are not harmful to biodiversity, and to environmental and human health. The principles of using lighting responsibly focus on Where, When, How (intensity and energy use), and What wavelengths are used. The proposed 17,200 square feet light installation near habitat and wetlands negates the ecologically sensitive design elements that we initially supported in the Google Caribbean Project.

¹ <https://www.moffettparksp.com/vision-1>

² <https://www.moffettparksp.com/community-visioning-survey>

³ <https://www.sciencemag.org/news/2021/05/can-scientists-help-insects-survive-their-fatal-attraction-light-night> and <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/smart-news/light-pollution-contributes-insect-apocalypse-180973642>

We request that you deny lighting of this project, or defer consideration until Sunnyvale evaluates the compatibility of lighting with 1) the Guiding Principles of the Moffett Park Eco-District, and 2) Public desire for a district that enhances urban biodiversity, including outreach to our environmental organizations. Furthermore, given the many impacts of night lighting that we have delineated, we ask for Supplemental CEQA review of the art project.

Sincerely,

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Sierra Club Loma Prieta Chapter

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