



SANTA CRUZ COUNTY GROUP

Of The Ventana Chapter

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June 26, 2014

Farley Kern
Vice President
Corporate Communications
Hyatt

Dear Ms. Kern and Mr. Isaac,

We are writing with respect to the planned Hyatt Place Hotel at 407 Broadway St, Santa Cruz, CA and the heritage red horse chestnut tree that grows on the edge of this one acre site.

Ours is a community that values its heritage trees. We have a Heritage Tree Ordinance and rely on our city and developers to adhere to the ordinance to protect our remaining heritage trees whose numbers are lessening every year. We are concerned that the public record for this project reveals that no attempt to save this tree was made by the parties involved, namely the City Planning Department, the City Arborist, the owner/developer and her architect. The public record shows that the developer, the architect and the planning director made inaccurate statements to council about the tree's health, its roots and space requirements that effectively ruled out options for saving the tree.

Our city's Heritage Tree Ordinance (HTO) when this project was approved, states that a heritage tree can be removed, "only if a project design CANNOT be altered to accommodate the tree."
(HTO Criteria and Standards 1 (e))

Despite the mandates of the ordinance, there were no discussions about possibilities for altering the design to accommodate the tree. When questioned at a public meeting of neighbors as to why design changes weren't discussed, the project architect answered that the Hyatt Corporation has standard requirements for its hotels and cannot be flexible on the question of design change. Therefore the tree had to go.

This disregard for our Heritage Tree Ordinance and for this iconic heritage tree is not consistent with your explicit policy of "environmental stewardship" and your desire to be a good neighbor. It would not bode well for reputation and continuing community support for the very first Hyatt in Santa Cruz if this tree is destroyed on the basis of inaccurate statements and an inflexible design choice.

The Sierra Club supports the preservation of our heritage trees in general and this unique, historic and beloved tree in particular. We urge you to advocate for a design change for the Hyatt Place and initiate discussions with the developer and her architect to achieve the goal of saving the red horse chestnut tree.

We understand that there were a number of options for saving the tree proposed to the city and the developer by the tree advocacy group *Save Our Big Trees* in response to the council-directed three month waiting period following the council vote on January 14th 2014. Neither the city nor the developer has responded to their proposal.

Since this project carries the Hyatt name we look to you to take a leadership role in resolving this issue by saving the tree. The good public relations resulting from such an action would be priceless and celebrated by the community, including our many Sierra Club members.

We look forward to your response.

Sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Greg McPheeters". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Greg McPheeters
Chair, Santa Cruz Group, Sierra Club