

Exhibit A

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Robert Joyce

Architecture & Landscape Design

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Martha Diehl, Chair
Monterey County Planning Commission
168 West Alisal Street, 2nd Floor
Salinas, CA 93901

Re: 3196 17 Mile Drive - Existing Cypress Tree Assessment / Proposed Plan

PROJECT LOCATION AND BACKGROUND

3196 17 Mile Drive is located at the center of the Del Monte Grove coastline, just 4 lots above the Lone Cypress. The current 10,895 sf house and site were developed in the early 90's under an earlier version of LUP Policy 20. Several large Cypress are within 1' to 4' of house foundation. Many large Cypress trees are under significant hardscape coverage.

In 2013, the current owner purchased the property and, after reviewing reports on the house condition, decided to consider a plan to demolish the existing house and build a new house on the existing footprint. The owner asked us to prepare plans for a home of comparable size (10,195 sf). The proposed house requires no tree removal, very minimal grading and removes over 2,700 sf of irrigated garden area and 1,500 sf of hardscape. The design proposes to reuse existing foundations for most of the new construction.

At the time of our first meeting, the owner pointed out that in the three years since he had bought the property, several of the larger Cypress trees close to the house and driveway had lost multiple large branches, which concerned him. As a part of the new house design he wanted us to review, and if possible improve, the conditions of these Cypress trees.

POLICY 20 - REVIEW EXISTING AND PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT IMPACT ON CYPRESS TREES

As part of the design process, we reviewed policies of the Del Monte Forest Land Use Plan and the ESHA policies applicable to this area of the Del Monte Forest. We are designing to the limits set forth in the 2012 LUP Policy 20 and want to get feedback from the Planning Commission on the project configuration in general, and in particular, concerning 4 large Cypress trees close to the existing house. The LUP 2012 Policy 20 clearly states its purpose as follows: “all use and development in or adjacent to indigenous Monterey cypress habitat areas shall be compatible with the objective of protecting this environmentally sensitive coastal resource.” Three basic tenets are included regarding new development referred to as “improvements”:

- 1 First in general, that “all improvements shall be carefully sited and designed to avoid any potential damage or degradation of Monterey cypress habitat, including the microhabitat of individual cypress trees”....
- 2”and must be located within existing hardscaped areas”.....
- 3”and (must be located within existing hardscaped areas and) outside of the drip line of individual cypress trees.”

Given all three of the above design directives, we are seeking direction from the Planning Commission for our work at the 3196 site and how to respond to, or balance, staying within the existing hardscape footprint (directive #2), while at the same time staying outside of the existing Cypress dripline (directive #3). For example, our site assessment determined that over 65% of the existing hardscape footprint is under the dripline of 5 to 7 mature Cypress trees. In the specific case of 4 large Cypress trees analyzed by the project forester, the driplines are covered by between 45% to 75% built or paved surfaces. These same Cypress trees are located as near as 1 to 4 feet from the existing building mass (see pages A 2 – A 3.2) These specific trees are also visibly showing signs of stress with an atypical, large branch splintering and drop pattern from the Cypress’ upper story canopy (see page A1 for photos and forester’s report by Ralph Osterling, attached).

The challenge is how best to respond to these 4 declining trees within the directions of Policy 20. One possibility is to carefully remove and relocate small areas of existing hardscape and reconfigure any new development in a way that clearly improves the quantity and quality of the both the dripline and the root zone for these key Cypress trees and others. This approach attempts to better respond to the Policy 20 objective of protecting this environmentally sensitive resource and attempts to strike a balance between the development challenges of all 3 tenets stated in the Policy 20: 1) not harm cypress, 2) locate within existing hardscape and 3) locate outside of dripline of existing Cypress trees (with top priority given to item #3 Cypress dripline area). The second possibility of siting the home anywhere within the existing hardscape footprint, including within dripline areas, while meeting code, would in the Forester's opinion, result in continued decline and long term loss of several large Cypress.

3196 DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY / CYPRESS TREE CASE STUDY

This process for our team working on 3196 required a careful case by case, Cypress by Cypress, review to direct the best development plan for the Cypress trees in question, while allowing for a house and drive of similar or smaller design to that which existed. We considered the merits of removing hardscape (both building and drive) from Cypress root zone areas when possible, and the impact of relocating small areas of this development to adjacent areas outside of the Cypress tree's drip line or root zone.

The current LUP Policy 20 refers to Cypress tree dripline as the limit of site development. For purposes of mapping our study (see attached pages A 1 - A 4.2) consulting forester, Ralph Osterling, recommended a 1" trunk to 1.2' root zone diameter ratio. He suggested that this ratio generates a root zone area that routinely exceeds dripline area by 10 to 20%, and that for any site development analysis this would provide a more conservative limit of new construction.

In our proposed house development plan the total amount of hardscape is reduced by nearly 1,500sf. More importantly, only 29% of this proposed hardscape footprint is under the drip line of key Cypress trees as opposed to 65% of the existing hardscape footprint that is currently under the Cypress drip line. This is to say that the proposed plan removes and additional 3,000 sf of hardscape from areas that currently cover Cypress root zone. This was done through a design concept that breaks the existing house single building mass into a more village like composition with several garden courtyards, and replacing a very grand existing entry gate and drive with a simple 13' porous gravel drive. Hardscape treatments include paving using Flagstones on sand with planting between are used throughout to allow air and moisture penetration.

In the attached highlighted images (pages A1 – A3.2) we have looked carefully at how to best improve the conditions of 4 large Cypress at the 3196 site. The design reduces the root zone coverage of a 60" Cypress from 45% to 1% and reduces the root zone coverage of a 26" Cypress from 75% to 16%. It is the firm belief of Ralph Osterling, consulting forester, that given this hardscape correction, these trees' roots and feeder areas will benefit from the improved moisture and gas exchange for a healthy functioning root system, and, in the next 5 to 10 years, reverse their decline and thrive over time. Mr. Osterling also noted that the proposed lower, more open, building mass will promote the positive effects of ocean breezes and moisture moving through the site to Cypress trees east of the residence.

The proposed development plan at 3196 was in large part shaped to respond to and preserve the 4 largest trees closest to the existing hardscape building site. The owner's position is that these trees are the most visible part of the experience of the property surrounding the house and their long-term wellbeing is of great concern. The owner would like to develop the site in a way that provides a house of similar size to what they purchased, but would like to do it in a way that breaks up the building mass, creates garden courtyards around key Cypress and enhances the life of these Cypress trees and the larger habitat. It is our hope that the proposed plan, with its consideration for the wellbeing of key large Cypress trees and other Cypress sensitive measures, demonstrates a serious attempt to reconcile the 3 tenets of the current Policy 20 on a challenging site, with many aggressively nonconforming existing conditions.

In conclusion, given current site conditions, we are asking for direction from the Planning Commission on whether we must look exclusively to the existing hardscaped areas for future development, which could result in the long-term loss of Cypress trees discussed above, or if we can also incorporate the dripline criteria for a design that is more responsive to Cypress trees in question. We believe we have developed a design that responds to general and specific tenets of Del Monte Forest LUP Policy 20. Given the particulars of this site, the analysis presented supports a design approach to avoid degradation of Monterey cypress habitat by reducing impervious surfaces / hardscaped areas within the Cypress tree drip line, one directive in Policy 20. It is our hope that in prioritizing the dripline requirements for the 4 large Cypress at 3196, we are better responding to LUP ESHA Key Policy - to maintain and enhance sensitive cypress habitat and individual Cypress trees.

We look forward to this opportunity to meet with the Planning Commission and conduct an initial screening of policy consistency concerning native cypress habitat.

Sincerely,

Robert Joyce