

From: [Ari, Alex, Becky, and Chris Thomas](#)
To: [PlanningAgency](#)
Subject: Comments on item number 2 and ORD21-0001 for the Nov 4 Planning Commission Agenda
Date: November 01, 2021 4:14:20 PM

EXTERNAL

Dear Planning Commissioners and Staff;

I strongly support protection for trees in Sonoma County, particularly those that are currently mature enough (and those near enough to maturity) to sequester atmospheric carbon in these next pivotal years ahead. If we are going to have any chance at avoiding the most severe consequences of climate change we simply must stop taking down trees that are contributing to carbon sequestration efforts for the next several years. It is my hope that not only do we stop taking out these trees for as many years as necessary to begin to reduce annual net CO2 emissions in an ongoing way but also that we can actively reforest public and private lands at unprecedented rates.

Reading the staff report, it looks like an update about work in progress for a draft ordinance to be presented for your review in early 2022 and Board of Supervisors consideration in late summer or fall. Please ensure staff direction from you reinforces the need to protect trees, particularly oaks, for the near term. I understand that the overarching goal is to balance natural resources with sustainable development and at this time the priority must be for the former or there won't be a latter. If the property can't be developed now without taking out or harming the current oak woodland *at all*, then it is not time to develop that property in that way. Period. And please ensure that just because the focus is on oak forest and woodland, we don't lose sight of other trees in Sonoma County. The staff report seems to indicate that oak forest and woodland is the key gap in a series of current regulatory protections and that work is being done to confirm that assertion (among other things), but it was not clear if the work has been completed to confirm it and/or if the analysis is broad enough to support that conclusion. The best available science indicates interrelationships with many many other species and the effects of climate change already upon us may highlight additional key relationships for longer term health and growth of oak woodlands and others. Please establish the burden of proof that no harm will be done to any carbon-sequestering trees on the developer and set as high a bar for that proof as can be supported with the best science available, even if that science itself is not fully tested. For the time being, we must do as much as we can imagine to protect our CO2 sequesters and biodiversity in our remaining lands in the county. With that direction, when the draft ordinance comes back to you, please recommend to the Board of Supervisors a science-based tree ordinance that supports healthy forests going forward for at least the next generation, preferably the next 7 generations.

Thank you;

Sincerely,

Chris Thomas

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