

TREE COMMITTEE AGENDA REPORT

SUBJECT: REQUEST TO REMOVE 20 EXISTING TREES AND PROVIDE 45 COMPENSATORY TREE PLANTINGS AT 3450 BROAD STREET; THE PROJECT IS CATEGORICALLY EXEMPT FROM ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW (TREE-0033-2025)

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RECOMMENDATION

Review the proposed tree removals and compensatory plantings for consistency with requirements in San Luis Obispo Municipal Code Chapter 12.24 (Tree Regulations) and provide a recommendation to the Planning Commission.

SITE DATA

Land Use Designation: Services and Manufacturing

Zone: Service Commercial Zone with Planned Development Overlay (C-S-PD)

Site Area: Approximately 3.5 acres

Environmental Status: Categorically exempt from environmental review under CEQA Guidelines Section 15332 (Class 32 – In-Fill Development Projects)



1.0 PROJECT DESCRIPTION

San Luis Obispo Classical Academy (SLOCA, Applicant) has applied for a Tree Removal Application (TRA, TREE-0033-2025) to remove 20 existing trees and provide 45 compensatory tree plantings at 3450 Broad Street (Attachment A – SLOCA Tree Removal Application, Attachment C – SLOCA Arborist Report). The TRA is associated with the Applicant's Moderate Development Review (ARCH-0672-2024), Planned Development Amendment (PDEV-0673-2024), and Conditional Use Permit (USE-0674-2024) applications to establish and operate a private school with daycare services (i.e., infant childcare through eighth grade), including various building and site improvements, at the existing development (Attachment B – SLOCA Project Plans).

Proposed building improvements include (a) an approximate 4,300 square foot addition (i.e., enclose loading dock to accommodate gymnasium, second floor offices, and library mezzanine) to the existing approximate 50,800 square foot building (to result in an approximate 55,100 square foot building); (b) tenant improvements to create classrooms, offices, library, gymnasium, etc.; (c) façade upgrades, including new exterior colors and

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finishes; and (d) establishment of a sign program. Proposed site improvements include (a) removal of the north parking lot and replacement with an outdoor field and various activity areas; (b) design revisions to the south parking lot to accommodate new access and circulation improvements; and (c) landscape upgrades, which include the 20 tree removals and 45 compensatory tree plantings.

In addition to the Tree Committee's (TC) review, the overall project scope requires a review and recommendation by the Architectural Review Commission (ARC) for the various proposed building and site improvements, and a final review and decision by the Planning Commission (PC) to allow the private school and daycare services along with all associated building and site improvements. The project is tentatively scheduled for the ARC's review on Monday, April 7, 2025, and for the PC's review and final decision on Wednesday, May 14, 2025.

Tree Removals

The project site includes a total of 40 trees, which consist primarily of Callery pear trees (*Pyrus calleryana*) with three (3) Australian willows (*Geijera parviflora*), three (3) coast live oaks (*Quercus agrifolia*), one (1) Western Sycamore (*Platanus racemosa*), and one (1) cut tree (currently a stump and may have been a plum tree) (Attachment B – Sheet L1.2A of Project Plans). To facilitate the project, the Applicant is requesting the removal of 20 trees as follows:

- To accommodate a new outdoor field and various recreational activity areas, nine (9) trees located in the north parking lot (identified as Trees #2-6, 8, 30-31) would be removed;
 - Note – Tree #8 has been cut (may have previously been a plum tree), and its stump is to be removed as part of the project.
- To accommodate new decks for outdoor classroom areas and a seating area, ten (10) trees located in the side yard along Sacramento Drive (identified as Trees #9-16, 32, 36) would be removed; and
- To accommodate a new parking design, one (1) tree located in the south parking lot (identified as Tree #37) would be removed.

Compensatory Plantings

As proposed, the project includes 45 compensatory plantings consisting of Chitalpas (*Chitalpa tashkentensis*), Brisbane box trees (*Lophostemon confertus*), coast live oaks (*Quercus agrifolia*), Engelmann oaks (*Quercus engelmannii*), island oaks (*Quercus tomentella*), water gum (*Tristanopsis laurina*), and Chinese elms (*Ulmus parvifolia*) (Attachment B – Sheet L1.2C of Project Plans). These compensatory trees would (a) range from 24-inch to 60-inch box replacements; (b) be planted on the perimeter of the outdoor field, along Sacramento Drive, and throughout the south parking area; (c) be native or native-adjacent trees; and (d) result in larger and more visually prominent trees at maturity for a majority of the selected species. In addition, the 20 existing trees to remain would be protected during project construction.

2.0 COMMITTEE PURVIEW

Per [Section 12.24.090\(F\)\(4\)](#) (Process for Tree Removals Related to Ministerial or Discretionary Property Development Permits), the TC is to review a TRA related to Planning Applications (i.e., Moderate Development Review, Planned Development Amendment, and Conditional Use Permit) that require final approval by the PC and provide a recommendation to the PC as the approving authority. The TC's review and recommendation for the project would be based on consistency with the policies and standards set forth in San Luis Obispo Municipal Code (SLOMC) [Chapter 12.24](#) (Tree Regulations).

3.0 TREE REGULATIONS

Per SLOMC [Chapter 12.24](#) (Tree Regulations), the purpose of the Tree Regulations is to establish a comprehensive program for installing, maintaining, and preserving trees within the City. This Chapter establishes policies, regulations, and specifications necessary to govern installation, maintenance, removal, and preservation of trees to beautify the city; purify the air; provide shade and wind protection; add environmental and economic value; and preserve trees with historic or unusual value.

Criteria for Construction Related Tree Removal Recommendations

Per SLOMC [Section 12.24.090\(F\)\(4\)](#), the TC shall review and make a recommendation on the tree removal request to the authorized approving authority (i.e., PC) based on the criteria set forth in SLOMC [Section 12.24.090\(G\)\(1-7\)](#):

- Size of Tree – Per [Subsection \(G\)\(1\)](#), the scale of the tree shall be considered, as well as the size of the tree's canopy. Larger, more visually prominent trees may have a higher preservation priority than smaller, less visually prominent trees.

The trees proposed for removal are fairly small in scale, ranging from 3 to 11-inches in diameter at breast height (DBH), with limited to moderate canopy sizes.

- Location of Tree on Private Property – Per [Subsection \(G\)\(2\)](#), the location of the tree on private property shall be considered. Trees located in a private rear yard, which are not highly visible from the public right-of-way, may have a lower preservation priority than trees with a high visual impact to the neighborhood.

The locations of the trees proposed for removal are visible from the public right-of-way because they are primarily located in the north parking lot and side yard area along Sacramento Drive. However, these trees may carry a lower preservation priority because they do not have a high visual impact to the neighborhood based on their fairly small scales.

- Species of Tree – Per [Subsection \(G\)\(3\)](#), native trees shall have a higher preservation priority than non-native trees.

The pear trees proposed for removal are non-native.

- Forestry Best Practice – Per [Subsection \(G\)\(4\)](#), the number of healthy trees that a given parcel of land will support shall be considered, and whether removal would enhance the health or survival of remaining trees. Applications that increase biodiversity of native trees and tree age distribution within a given area are preferred.

Of the 20 trees to be removed, 13 are in poor condition, six (6) are in fair condition, and one (1) has been cut and is a stump. The remaining 20 trees would be protected on site. As proposed, the 45 compensatory trees would provide a range of young native and native-adjacent trees that would increase the biodiversity and tree age distribution of the project site. The majority of the species selected are expected to result in larger and more visually prominent trees at maturity.

- Public Right-of-Way Obstruction or Displacement – Per [Subsection \(G\)\(5\)](#), street trees requested for removal due to obstruction of vision, access, mobility of public traffic or sidewalk infrastructure repair or replacement shall have a lower preservation priority when the tree species is known to have invasive root structure or other characteristics that increase the likelihood that damage is likely to reoccur if not authorized for removal. Trees adjacent to sidewalks with a high volume of pedestrian use with large vertical or slope displacements may have a lower preservation priority.

The trees proposed for removal are not due to obstruction of vision, access, mobility of public traffic or sidewalk infrastructure repair or replacement but are requested to accommodate new site improvements for a proposed school use.

- Compliance with Subsection J of This Section Regarding Compensatory Plantings – Per [Subsection \(G\)\(6\)](#), the approving authority may consider an application proposal to provide compensatory plantings in excess of required minimums in evaluating this criterion.

Per [Section 12.24.090\(J\)](#) (Compensatory Tree Planting), onsite tree removals require a minimum of one (1) new tree for each tree authorized for removal (1:1 replacement ratio). As proposed, the 20 tree removals and 45 compensatory plantings would result in a replacement ratio of 2.25:1, which significantly exceeds the minimum 1:1 requirement. All compensatory plantings will range from 24-inch to 60-inch box, exceeding the minimum 15-gallon size requirement.

- Heritage Trees – Per [Subsection \(G\)\(7\)](#), heritage trees have the highest preservation priority.

None of the trees onsite, or proposed for removal, are designated as heritage trees.

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Based on the criteria and accompanying discussion above, the proposed tree removals and compensatory plantings appear to be consistent with the City's Tree Regulations.

4.0 ACTIONS

1. **Recommend findings of consistency with the Tree Regulations.** An action recommending approval of the application based on consistency with the SLOMC Chapter 12.24 (Tree Regulations) will be forwarded to the Planning Commission for final action. This action may include recommendations for conditions to address consistency with the Tree Regulations.
2. **Continue the review of the project to a certain, or uncertain, hearing date.** An action continuing the application should include direction to the applicant and staff on pertinent issues.
3. **Recommend findings of inconsistency with the Tree Regulations.** An action recommending denial of the application should include findings that cite the basis for denial and should reference inconsistency with the General Plan, Tree Regulations, or other policy documents.

5.0 ATTACHMENTS

- A - SLOCA Tree Removal Application
- B - SLOCA Project Plans
- C - SLOCA Arborist Report