

PLANNING COMMISSION

Meeting Date: 02/05/2024

ADDITIONAL ITEM ADDED AFTER DISTRIBUTION OF PACKET (#1)

AGENDA ITEM # 4

Applicant/Project Name: Capalina SMA, LLC

Project Number: GPA22-0003, R22-0003, SDP22-0007, EIR23-003

Brief Description: Public Comment

Date 02/01/2024

Time 1:40 p.m.

February 1, 2024

Comments for the February 5, 2024 San Marcos Planning Commission Meeting

RE: Capalina Apartments Landscaping Plan

Planning Commission Members,

My name is Carrie Alidaee, and I'm a Wildlife Biologist with a Master's degree in Biology from Miami University and the San Diego Zoo Wildlife Alliance. I specialize in the ecology of plants and animals of San Diego County.

As a resident of San Marcos since 1994, I'm pleased with the plans for the development of apartments on Capalina Road. However, when I reviewed the plans for landscaping, I was highly dismayed. There are plants from Africa, the Mediterranean, China, India, and Mexico to name a few. Of the 46 plants listed, only five are from California. These non-native plants, some of which, like the Blood-red trumpet vine and Heavenly bamboo are invasive (harmful) and create a sterile, sometimes hostile habitat for native animals like birds and insects such as butterflies.

I'm sure that you are all familiar with the news of massive losses of biodiversity, especially here in San Diego County, leading some to say that we are in the "Sixth Extinction." This is human caused, a result of development of natural habitats into urban developments. It is important that we balance the loss of habitats by planting native plants wherever possible. California native plants provide our native animal and insect populations with the food and shelter that they require to exist and thrive. Native butterflies can only feed on native flowers, and birds can only feed on the seeds, fruits, and insects that native plants provide. A recent study found that in order for birds to be able to feed their chicks, at least 70% of landscape plants need to be native plants (Narango, Tallamy, and Marra, 2017). California native plants are drought tolerant and fire resistant (yes, really!). They require very little water and maintenance once established. Some suggestions for California native alternatives to the existing plan that are evergreen and native to San Marcos are:

California Coast Live Oak (*Quercus agrifolia*) – supports over 3,000 species of wildlife and is highly trimmable for shape and size

Toyon (*Heteromeles arbutifolia*) – white, bell-shaped flowers in summer and red berries in winter

Coyote Bush (*Baccharis pilularis*) – can be trimmed and shaped into topiary!

Laurel Sumac (*Malosma laurina*) – fast growing, trimmable, ideal for screening

Lemonadeberry (*Rhus integrifolia*) – ideal for screening, edible fruit

White Sage (*Salvia apiana*) – attractive shrub and ground cover

Sticky monkey-flower (*Mimulus aurantiacus*) – beautiful, flowering shrub with yellow, orange, or red blossoms

Canyon Sunflower (*Vengasia caresioides*) – attractive yellow sunflower plant

These are just a small number of the many alternative plants that would serve well as landscaping. There are innumerable sources of information about California native plants for landscaping, such as professional landscaper Heaviland's PDF that can be found on the web, Calscape.org, and the California Native Plant Society webpage.

If you love our San Marcos wildlife and want to see it thrive, if you want to San Marcos to be an example of sustainable and eco-friendly environmental planning, you will revise the landscaping plans of this apartment complex (and hopefully all plantable areas within San Marcos) to California native plants.

Thank you for your time,

Carrie Alidaee, M.A.

Narango, D.L., D.W. Tallamy, and P.P. Marra. 2017. Native plants improve breeding and foraging habitat for an insectivorous bird. *Biological Conservation* 213:42-50.