September 29, 2025

Rayanna Schmeling, Vice President
The Martin Group
1970 Broadway, Suite 745
Oakland, CA 94612

Subject: Valley oak #11
477 9th Avenue, San Mateo, CA

Dear Ms. Schmeling:

HortScience | Bartlett Consulting (Divisions of The F.A. Bartlett Tree Expert Company) prepared an **Arborist Report** for this project dated August 2024 (Revised November 2024). We were asked to monitor trees within the project area throughout construction. I have visited the site on seven occasions throughout construction which began in February of 2025.

Description of the Tree
When first assessed in 2023, valley oak #11 was in fair condition. Over time the tree has thinned out. With less foliage present along twigs and branches (Photo 1). The crown was asymmetric with more reduction pruning for line clearance between the first inspection and present day. Most of the tree's weight was over S. Claremont Street. The trunk had a heavy lean, and a crack had developed in the sidewalk opposite the lean (Photo 2). Several decay cavities were present along the trunk and in the main stems. Two beehives were present in the southern stem, one mid-tree and one near the top.



Photo 1 (above). Growth was healthy along twigs and branches, but the crown was thin in places.



Photo 2. Valley oak #11 leaned heavily over S. Claremont Street.

The tree had poor structure with lean, asymmetric form, and decay. The presence of a crack in the sidewalk may indicate that the lean is increasing. While decay is common in oaks of this size and age, tree stability relies on the production of new sound wood to compensate for the loss in strength of decayed wood.

According to San Mateo Municipal Code Section 27.71.150(e), heritage trees may only be removed when their continued presence poses a threat to health, safety, or welfare due to hazardous conditions. Based on my assessment, the subject tree exhibits significant structural instability caused by extensive trunk decay and canopy imbalance, creating a direct hazard to the public right-of-way.

From a management perspective, it is important to weigh the tree's benefits against the risk of failure. Arboriculture does not provide a standardized threshold for action; instead, the City of San Mateo must determine what level of risk is acceptable and how that risk compares to the tree's value.

While pruning can reduce the size of the crown and manage vigor, it also diminishes healthy foliage and may not sufficiently mitigate the underlying structural concerns.

Recommendation
Given the observed conditions, I recommend removal of the tree to eliminate the failure risk entirely. Tree #10 is a purpleleaf plum with a diameter of 3, 3, and 3. I recommend removing this low value tree.

Both trees should be replaced with one 15-galon tree that at maturity will not conflict with the overhead powerlines. I recommend planting one of the following species, recommendations include:

1. Hollyleaf cherry (*Prunus ilicifolia ssp. Ilicifolia)*
2. Emerald Sunshine elm (*Ulmus davidiana* var. *japonica* Emerald Sunshine')
3. Chinese flame (*Koelreuteria bipinnata*)

If preservation is the preferred path forward, I recommend significant crown reduction. The tree could be preserved by significantly reducing the crown to prevent impact on the adjacent right-of-way in the event of failure. However, this approach is likely to accelerate decline, eventually resulting in a dead tree or snag. I've included information on snag management for reference.

Thank you for your attention to this matter. Please don't hesitate to reach out with any questions or requests for further clarification. I look forward to your response.

Sincerely,



Darya Barar, Managing Consulting Urban Forester and Arborist
ISA Certified Arborist No. WE-6757A
Registered Consulting Arborist No. 693
ISA Tree Risk Assessment and Tree Appraisal Qualified

Enc. Managing dead trees as snags

Managing dead trees as snags

The ISA Pruning Best Management Practice publication (A300) includes use of notes that heading cuts may be used “to create or preserve wildlife habitat” (Lilly et al 2019). Large heading cuts made to stubs will reduce the size of the tree. Sprouts may need to be managed after creation of the snag. Creating a snag acknowledges that the tree is dead or will soon die and that decay will require its removal at some point in the future. The oak could be reduced significantly in size. Some live tissue will be present, but I expect the oak to decline and death shortly after pruning.

Once the is created, an ISA TRAQ qualified Certified Arborist should annually assess the snag every year to its stability to determine if it needs to be removed or reduced more if it needs. At some point, the snag will no longer be able to support the weight of a climber and a crane may be needed.

Other considerations include:

- Use coronet cuts to leave jagged tops. Mimicking a failed tree can create a more natural aesthetic to the snag. The increased surface area also allows decay fungi and other organisms to more rapidly create a complicated micro-biome within the wood.

- Shorten branches but do not remove them. They can be used as perches and retain some of the complicated three-dimensional structure of the tree.

- Create artificial inset cavities for **secondary cavity** nesting species. Similar to nesting boxes, these mimic vacant woodpecker cavities that other species can nest in (Figure 1). These should be specifically designed for a particular species because they have such specific habitat requirements. See French 2018 for more information. Contact the Audubon Society for local information.

- Use **kerf cuts** to mimic **bark flange** spaces for bats and other species nesting and roosting in these types of habitats.

- Create educational signage to teach visitors about the importance of dead trees to wildlife, the management of this snag and what they can do to improve wildlife habitat in their neighborhood (Figure 2).



Figure 1. An artificial inset cavity can be created in a snag that mimics a vacant woodpecker cavity.

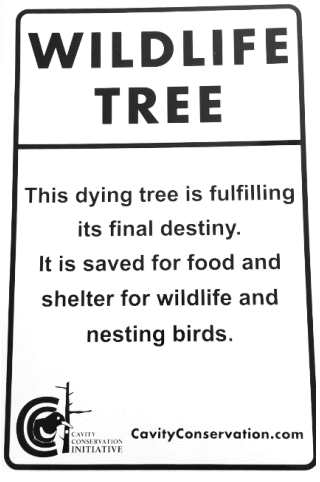


Figure 2. Educational signage can convey the importance of snags to wildlife and that the snag is being monitored.