

City Council of Berkeley,
April 15th, 2002

Re: Hills Fire Station, 3000 Shasta Rd. Variance #01-10000057

APR 15 PM 3:21
CITY OF BERKELEY
CITY CLERK DEPT

Dear Members of the Berkeley City Council,

We totally support the construction of this fire station. We, however, are appealing the decision which allows condition 18, bullet 6, attachment D, page 45, for "...a landscaping design using native species or those similar in character..."

The landscaping plan suggests the planting of eight native plant species along with ten non-native species. One of these non-native plants, Vinca minor, is a major pest in the East Bay. This is the very same plant that native plant restoration groups have organized teams regularly going out to remove from our local parklands. Instead we suggest planting a native such as a low growing form of ceanothus, e.g. Ceanothus griseus or C. hearstiorum, or a native strawberry, Fragaria

Instead of using the non-native Pannisetum South African grasses, we suggest some native bunch grasses, e.g., Nassella, purple needle grass, or Festuca californica, California fescue, or a Muhlenbergia spp., or Bromus carinatus.

Instead of a non-native ficus vine, we suggest the native clematis, Clematis lasiantha or Clematis ligusticifolia, virgin's bower, or a native morning glory, a Calystegia species, or the pipevine, Aristolochia californica, which would attract butterflies to a degraded habitat.

Instead of Nandina, we suggest planting a native shrub such as a barberry, Berberis repens.

Instead of Pyrus, plant Prunus lyonii, and instead of a liquid amber tree, plant a big-leaf maple, Acer macrophyllum.

Instead of a euphorbia, plant a salvia or wooly blue curls and or penstemons.

Instead of a Lorepetalum, plant a manzanita, Arctostaphylos densiflora or a currant such as Ribes sanguineum or Ribes viburnifolium.

Local sources for native plants: The Natives Here Nursery, along Golf Course Drive in Tilden Park, very near to the fire station site, has native plants that were grown from seeds collected in Alameda and Contra Costa counties. The California Native Plant Society volunteers also grow California native plants at the Regional Parks Botanic Garden in Tilden Regional Park.

We request that this matter be referred back to ZAB to clarify bullet six of condition #18. Our understanding of ZAB's intent about landscaping was that all plants to be used should be native California plants, not plants "similar in character" to natives. This "native plants only" should not preclude firefighters' planting a vegetable garden if they so choose and can find an appropriate spot to do so.

We have an opportunity to make our new fire station blend into a fitting entrance to Tilden Regional Park. Let us landscape with only natives to restore some of the biodiversity that existed here earlier.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Irene Winston". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned below the word "Sincerely,".

Irene Winston
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548-6734