

The Sierra Club would like to comment on the Moraga Canyon Sports Fields project DEIR. According to the Executive Summary (Chapter 2), the proposal is to build two new synthetic turf youth sports fields sized 150 feet by 300 feet and 75 feet by 150 feet. The proposed fields are to be used for soccer, softball, baseball, lacrosse and general play. They are to be located near the intersection of Moraga Ave. and Red Rock Road. The proposal includes lights for night games, new parking for approximately 40 vehicles, and a pedestrian bridge across Moraga Ave. To build the project will require removal of about 55 oak trees and other trees of varying number, grading, slope excavation, and the placement of retaining walls along the southern boundary of the Blair Park.

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We spoke to some of our Sierra Club members in Piedmont and they are totally opposed to this project. The main concerns expressed by our members include:

- Loss of native habitat for plants and animals in a narrow corridor that cannot be replaced.
- Water retention problems, runoff to Moraga Ave. and into the storm system in Oakland
- Creation of new filled land in a seismically active area (right on top of the Hayward Fault)
- Increase in traffic around the area of the new construction
- Danger to pedestrians and bicyclists along Moraga Ave.
- Noise from the removal of oak trees and creation of a flat field in the area known as Blair Park.

We would therefore like the response to include an analysis of proposed mitigations for:

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- *Loss of native habitat for plants and animals in a narrow corridor that cannot be replaced.* (Chapter 4.3) Though the DEIR calls for planting new oak trees in other areas, the project will still wipe out an existing wildlife corridor. The project calls for removing 55 coast live oaks and other trees that currently provide habitat for many different types of birds, including (as has been observed according to the DEIR) turkey vulture, red-tailed hawks, mourning doves, hummingbirds, and other varieties. New trees in a different location do not provide the same kinds of conditions needed by the birds for shelter and safety as currently exists in Blair Park alongside Moraga Ave.

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- *Creation of new filled land in a seismically active area* (right on top of the Hayward Fault) (Chapter 4.4). In the section "Slope Stability and Landslides," the DEIR states that "geologic feasibility report concluded the risk of earthquake-induced landsliding is very low." We would like this to be explained in greater detail. The site is located 2,700 feet from the Hayward Fault. It is currently covered by grasses and trees (for instance, oak.) How can the DEIR claim there that the site will not be a major risk of a landslide in the event of an earthquake in the next 30 years (predicted to exceed 6.0 on the Richter scale) – especially if the site contains thousands of tons of fill and the trees are removed?

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- *Danger to pedestrians and bicyclists along Moraga Ave.* (Chapter 4.7) Please explain how bicyclists traveling at 30 miles per hour or faster downhill are supposed to break for cars turning left across the line of traffic. Please explain how an increase in the number of accidents between cars, bicyclists and pedestrians will be avoided. It is our belief that

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the pedestrian bridge will not by itself alleviate this impact. The bridge, according to our interpretation, will only connect 2 sports fields on either side of Moraga Ave., while not serving either pedestrians or bicyclists who are not going to the sports fields.

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- *Additional noise ensuing from the removal of oak trees and creation of a flat field in the area known as Blair Park.* (Chapter 4.8) In the section “Policy 22.1 – Noise Insulation for New Development” and following, the DEIR implies that noise reduction is the responsibility of homeowners, who should insulate their buildings more. At least, this is our interpretation of the document. We also dispute the finding in section 4.8.4 that the project “would not generate any substantial ground borne noise or vibration during park operations.” Common sense would dictate that by creating a flat field where there was previously a tree lined park (the area known as Blair Park), there will substantially much more noise than in current conditions.

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In summary, the Sierra Club finds much to criticize with this project, and with a DEIR that appears to conclude that the impacts on wildlife, neighbors and pedestrians are all not substantial enough to deter the project. The City of Piedmont already has one self-imposed problem on its hands with a failed undergrounding of telephone wires. It seems to us that the City would do better to concentrate on fixing one problem first, before creating a new problem.

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We further find this project objectionable because it serves the interests of a minority of the community (parents of children who play sports, and their children) over the needs of wildlife and neighboring residents, including residents in nearby Oakland. It has been pointed out by numerous citizens responding to this project that there are plenty of sports fields available within 20 minutes driving distance. While the Sierra Club promotes less use of the automobile, it does not support removing wild spaces like Blair Park to create new destinations for pedestrians.

We urge the City Council and Planning Commission to cancel this project and respect the call of the many citizens who have responded over the past 12 and more months.

Sincerely,

Sierra Club, S.F. Bay Chapter
Kent Lewandowski
Chair, Northern Alameda County Group
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