

City of Albany



TO: Albany Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Commission

FROM: Allison Carrillo, CIP Program Manager
James Cirelli, Associate Engineer
John Hawkridge, Urban Forester

SUBJECT: 5-1. Pavement & Curb Rehabilitation Project – Marin Ave Phase 2 Tree Removals

AGENDA DATE: June 12, 2025

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

That the Parks, Recreation, and Open Space (PROS) Commission receive a presentation regarding the Pavement & Curb Rehabilitation Project – Marin Ave Phase 2 (Project) and potential tree removals to be conducted during the Project.

BACKGROUND

The Marin Avenue Pavement & Curb Ramp Rehabilitation Project started as a paving project in November 2020 based on the results of the 2019 Pavement Management Technical Assistance Program report under the City's Annual Streets Rehabilitation Program (CIP No. 21000). It has since grown to include necessary stormwater drainage rehabilitation and traffic signal renewal, along with enhancements to pedestrian and bicycle safety – including potential intersection street lighting improvements. Proposed intersection street lighting improvements are currently included in the Project as a bid alternative for evaluation when bid costs are received.

Staff presented the Project to City Council on April 7, 2025 (see Attachment 1 - Marin Avenue Pavement & Curb Ramp Rehabilitation Project Report, Dated April 2025, for a summary of the Project that was included in the April 7, 2025 City Council Staff Report).

DISCUSSION

There are approximately 106 street trees within the Project extents. The Project design protected existing trees to the maximum extent feasible with several strategies, such as a payment item solely for tree protection, locating of proposed infrastructure and conduit trenching outside of tree extents, and repairing sidewalks with “curves” to avoid tree roots. During final design of the Project, staff identified two existing street trees where removal is likely necessary to complete the construction of Project improvements as proposed: 1498 Marin (on Neilson) and 1501 Marin.

1498 Marin (on Neilson) – Liquidambar 18” dbh Tree ID #2824

The City’s Street Tree Inventory identifies this tree as an American Sweet Gum (*Liquidambar styraciflua*) with a DBH range of 13-18 inches and assesses the tree’s overall health as poor. The tree was initially identified for review as staff were concerned about construction impacts given the location of a new proposed storm drain inlet. Review of the tree revealed the tree has several issues that create concern regardless of the proposed construction work.

The tree is located a few feet from a power pole with roots visibly growing around, and possibly into the base of the pole. The tree is regularly topped for high-voltage powerline clearance. There is continued sidewalk lifting from the massive root plate that extends up and down the parkway. The tree also exhibits narrow branching unions, typical of the species, and has epicormic sprouting along its main stems, typically a sign of tree health decline. The over-winter leaves were marcescent (retained on the tree), often indicating a tree under stress.

The main concern however is the extensive decay visible in the root plate and at the base of one of the three main lateral limbs. At the base of one of the remaining main stems is a wound that compromises the integrity of that, and possibly the other two main stems. Also, and more concerning, is the decay in the root plate, as can be seen on the curb side of the tree. *Armillaria mellea* (aka, white rot fungus or, root rot) fruiting bodies were observed growing from the root plate in February of this year.



(Narrow branching unions of main stems [left] and epicormic sprouting and marcescence [right])



(Decay at base of stem)



(Armillaria fruiting bodies)

1501 Marin – London Plane Tree 12” dbh Tree ID #1639

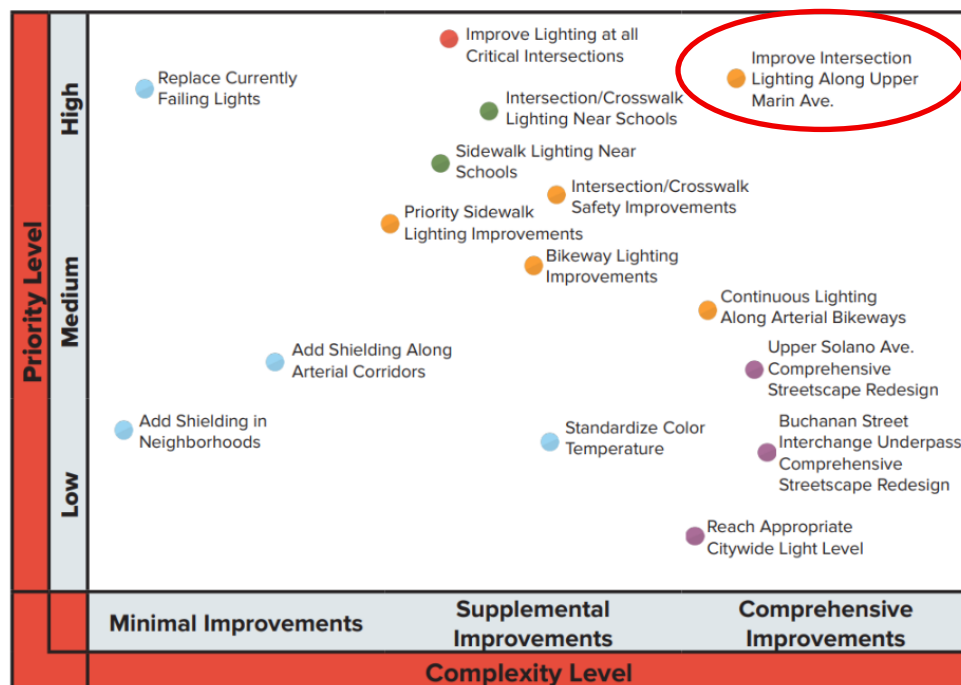
The City’s Street Tree Inventory identifies this tree as a London Plane Tree (*Platanus x acerifolia*) with a DBH range of 7-12 inches and assesses the tree’s overall health as fair. While the tree is in fair condition, it is also in conflict with potential intersection safety lighting improvements for the east leg of the Marin/Neilson intersection.

As noted earlier, final determination on whether the proposed intersection street light improvements will be included in the final construction project is dependent on evaluation of bid alternative costs. This will include review of available project funding and final City Council approval. However, staff are providing background and update of design efforts, including staff investigation into alternative layouts at locations of conflict.

As an overview, the street lighting improvements along Marin Avenue are proposed at 9 intersections, totaling 31 pedestrian crossings which cross numerous bikeways and vehicular lanes. Of those 31 pedestrian crossings evaluated for intersection streetlight improvements, the 1501 Marin Avenue location is the only one where the conflict between proposed intersection safety lighting and existing street trees could not be avoided.

Citywide Streetlight Evaluation

The need for Upper Marin Avenue intersection lighting improvements were identified during a Citywide Streetlight Evaluation (SLE) which completed in early 2024 and is considered a high-complexity, high-priority project. Staff identified a nexus with the limits of the ongoing Marin Avenue Pavement Rehabilitation Project and an opportunity to be able to deliver intersection safety streetlight improvements in conjunction with other planned work. Over the last year, staff have worked to expedite streetlight design and incorporate into the larger Marin Avenue Pavement Rehabilitation project scope.



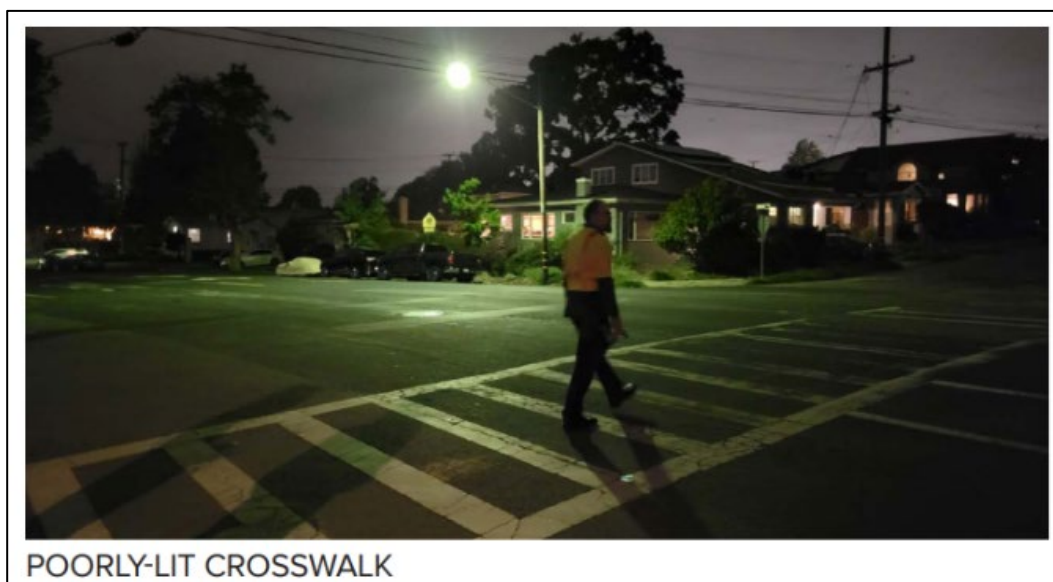
(Improvement Priorities – SLE, Final Street Lighting Recommendations)

During this Citywide Streetlight Assessment, the Marin/Neilson intersection was coincidentally selected as one of the 10 sites where more in-depth and site-specific observations and measurements were performed. As seen in the photos, the intersection is low and unevenly lit; this is supported by illuminance data/luminance measurements showing that the intersection has light levels which are too far below criteria, resulting in inadequate visibility and safety concerns.

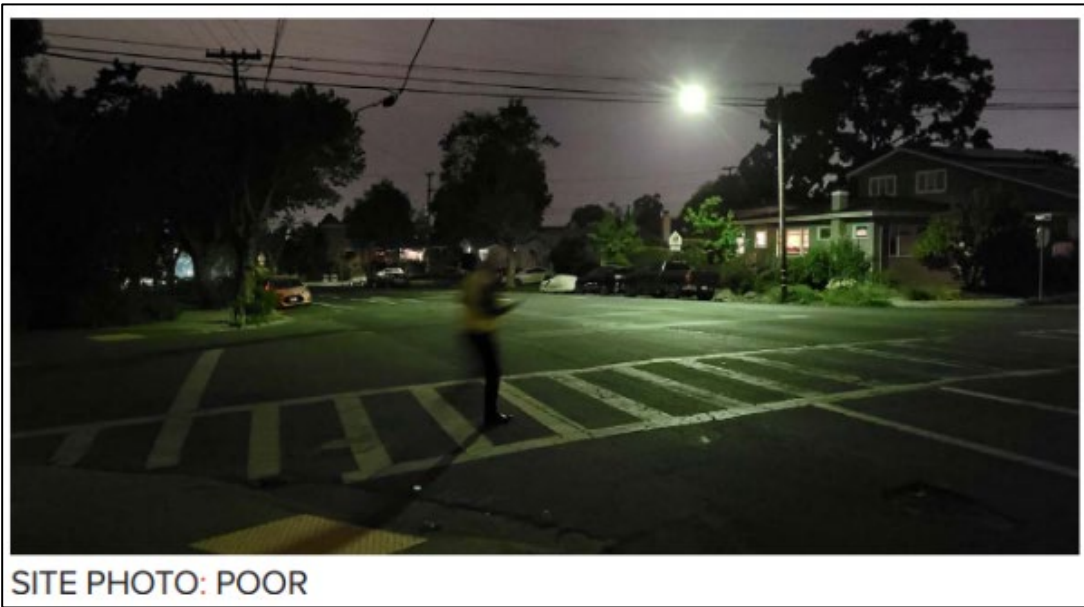


(NE Corner of Marin/Neilson – SLE, Existing Lighting Conditions)

Not only does the intersection not meet a reasonable range of measurements, photos of the intersection (specifically the east leg of the Marin/Neilson intersection) were later used in the Citywide Streetlight Evaluation to showcase an example of poor lighting in Albany.

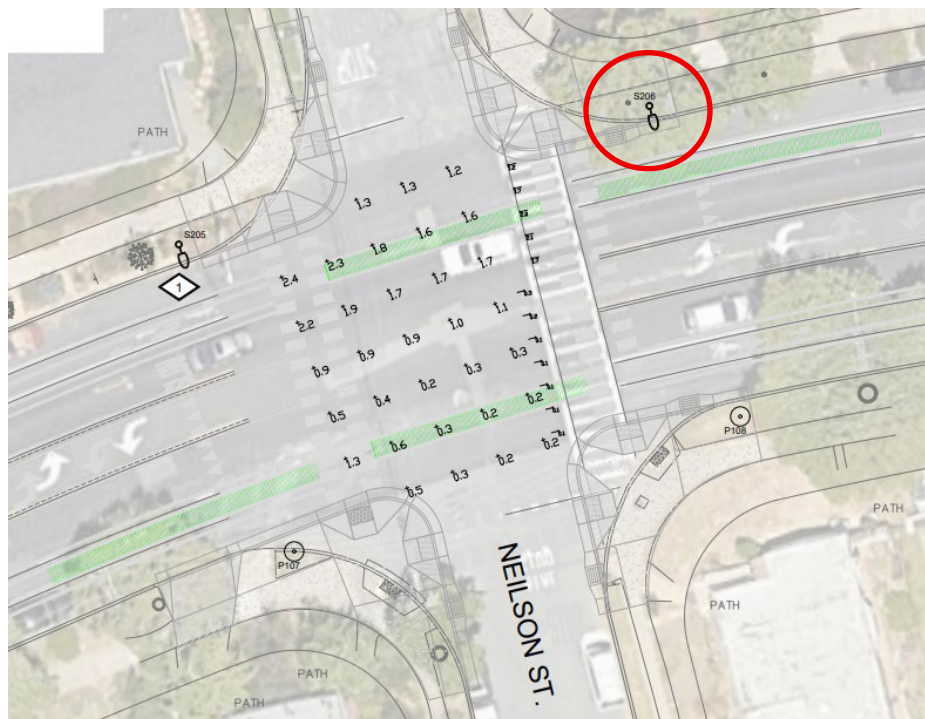


(Photo 1: NW Corner of Marin/Neilson at East Leg Crossing; – SLE, Existing Lighting Conditions)



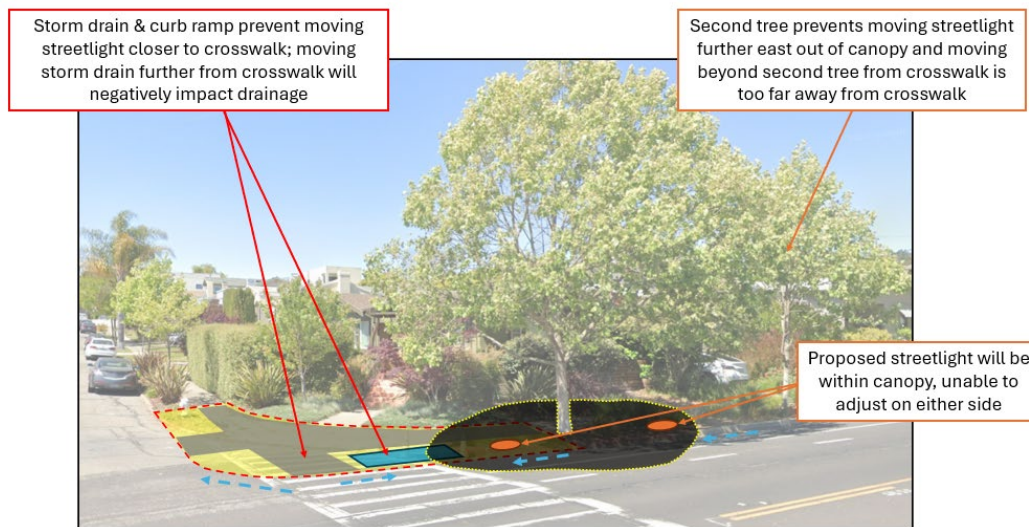
(Photo 2: NW Corner of Marin/Neilson at East Leg Crossing; – SLE, Existing Lighting Conditions)

Subsequent lighting design consisted of considerations over a variety of key elements, including glare, balancing uniformity & contrast, and light source locations. Given the lighting concerns along Upper Marin Avenue and known need to coordinate with existing tree canopies, the project also included a corridor-wide warranting process with photometric study to ensure a site-specific approach for choosing the appropriate lighting design. This included coordinating locations of all intersection light source(s) to provide the right level and quality of lighting, *at the right locations*.



(Excerpt of Photometric Study of Marin/Neilson intersection)

For the NE corner of Marin/Neilson, project design explored multiple options for adjusting the streetlight location but were unable to identify a location where the proposed streetlight could be placed with sufficient clearance from existing trees, while still providing 1) the level and quality of lighting per guidelines established in the Citywide Streetlight Evaluation, 2) maintaining accessibility requirements at the curb ramp, and 3) ensuring stormwater flow is properly captured upstream of the ADA curb ramp so as to prevent water ponding in the vicinity of the pedestrian crossing.



Specifically, there is insufficient space available to move the streetlight westward towards the curb ramp without relocating the storm drain inlet. Relocating of the storm drain eastward to avoid impacting the existing trees would result in water ponding at a low point in the vicinity of a shallow curb ramp/pedestrian crossing. For more background about the storm drain and curb ramp design challenges on the Project, refer to Attachment 1 (Marin Avenue Pavement & Curb Ramp Rehabilitation Project Report, Dated April 2025).

The streetlight is also unable to be moved further east so as to fully avoid the two trees at the 1501 Marin frontage as the extended distance to the crosswalk will negatively impact lighting quality. If the streetlight were placed between the two trees at 1501 Marin Avenue without removing Tree#1639, lighting would be impacted from two directions.

Conversely, placing the light to the west of the curb ramp (at the apex corner) would result in backlighting and obscuring pedestrians in the westbound direction while simultaneously over-lighting pedestrians from the eastbound direction – allowing the poor lighting conditions originally identified in the Citywide Streetlighting Evaluation to persist or worsen.

Tree #1639 was planted around 2009–2010 in anticipation of the removal of a mature Camphor tree that previously occupied the space where tree #1638 now stands. Tree #1638 was subsequently planted in approximately 2011–2012, following the Camphor's removal due to significant sidewalk displacement. Since then, #1638 has shown limited growth, likely due to competition for light and space from the adjacent #1639.

Under current standards, a tree would not be planted in the location of #1639 due to its close proximity to the ingress of the intersection.

If the project moves forward as planned, the removal of #1639 would create additional space and sunlight, allowing #1638 the opportunity to more fully develop its canopy, yet not obscure illumination from the new streetlight.

ATTACHMENT

1. Marin Avenue Pavement & Curb Ramp Rehabilitation Project Report, Dated April 2025
2. Project Plan Sheet C1.4 Identifying Potential Tree Removal Locations
3. Citywide Streetlight Evaluation – Existing Lighting Conditions, dated 7/28/2023