

March 01, 2026

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Subject: Updated Letter, Removal of Dangerous Street Tree at Newly Purchased Property, 347 Indiana Ave.

Dear Claremont Community Services Department:

The new information presented in this letter renders our earlier letter of January 14 obsolete. Please discard the earlier letter, and base your Department decision on this letter alone. The emphasis on balancing tree welfare with public safety (Manual and Guidelines, pp. 3, 5, 31) clearly places this issue within the responsibilities of your Department, and the escalation in urgency requires insistence that removal be approved at your Department level, without the delay of appearing before that committee you told us always votes “no.” Prior to discussing the new developments, a brief review might be helpful:

1. Department staff has admitted our problem is due to a mistake made when locating the tree at planting, many years ago. While personally inspecting the tree, your staff member declared, “This is the wrong tree, in the wrong place, at the wrong time.” The wrong time, I assumed, was referring to “maturity.” [name of staff member provided upon request]
2. The mature street trees on Indiana Ave. have proven extremely prone to Santa Ana wind blow-over and/or proactive removal and replacement due to risk of blow-over. In just the last 5 years, 7 or 8 of the mature trees have fallen. With only 9 houses total on Indiana Ave., this frightening statistic amounts to almost one tree down per house! Surely this statistic defines an emergency situation in the world of urban arboriculture.
3. This one tree, upon blow-over, has no place to land except on top of our house. Meteorological records show that Santa Ana winds strike the tree on its northeast quadrant, and our home is directly downwind on its southwest quadrant, and only 29 feet away! The tree is massive, with a trunk circumference of 10 feet! It will crush our house.
4. No arboricultural inspection or test applies to this case. The issue is whether any test can guarantee, given the horrendous 5-year record of Indiana Ave., that this tree will not be lost as the other trees in this planting have been. The answer, provided by an exhaustive AI search, is no, no such test exists. Please do not waste precious time conducting a useless test, one that simply confirms what everyone already agrees to—this is a healthy tree.
5. We have already pledged to pay the entire cost of removal, plus the cost of buying and planting a 20-gallon replacement, out of our personal savings. Resolving this problem with cost the city absolutely nothing!

The new developments follow:

1. In our earlier letter, we wrote that when winds are predicted, stress from this danger makes sleep impossible. However, at that time, we were unaware that sleep deprivation has medical consequences. In our case, the consequence is loss of balance, which in our case can prove fatal. My wife has already enrolled in the Casa Colina Balance Program, hoping to avoid a fatal fall before this tree is removed. Her first appointment was on February 26, 2026 [name of case physician on request].

2. It would be helpful to explain to you why we are at special risk. We are both elderly and severely disabled and subject to protections of the Americans with Disabilities Act. In my case, I am 83 and orthopedically severely deformed, to the degree that the left end of my pelvis is now intruding into my left bronchial tube and left lung, impeding breathing [case physician's name on request]. My wife has things worse, and is the primary reason this tree removal is a life and death matter. Her case merits special explanation, which is provided as follows.

3. My wife Carol is a victim of the Fosamax medication tragedy, resulting in her bones being dangerously thin and prone to fracture. For example, just stepping off a curb in the Village a few years ago caused her left leg to snap in half, resulting in a six-week hospitalization [bone surgeon name on request; case physician name on request]. Another fall could prove fatal, which is why removal of his tree and the sleep deprivation it causes, is so urgent.

Finally, please allow us to bring up the subject of "appearances," because appearances matter. Your Department is responsible for 25,100 street and park trees, and this entire fuss is over just one of all those 25,100 trees. As you now know, this single tree is causing heightened medical risk to an elderly, severely disabled couple. Fixing this problem, as you now know, will cost the city absolutely nothing. We will cover the entire cost of removing and replacing this admittedly mistakenly located tree. After reading this letter, you must agree that immediate removal is the only sensible and humane course. Further delay could be interpreted as willful cruelty, and why would any department wish to be seen in that light?

Sincerely,

Richard Suter, Ph.D.

Carol Suter