



City of Sierra Madre

Office of the City Clerk

232 W. Sierra Madre Blvd.,

Sierra Madre, CA

(626) 355-7135

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FW: Re: 281 W. Carter Ave., Sierra Madre – Support for Ongoing Enforcement and Request for Timely Abatement

From Gregory Silva <gsilva@sierramadreca.gov>

Date Thu 2/19/2026 4:11 PM

To Public Comment <publiccomment@sierramadreca.gov>

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Re: 281 W. Carter Ave., Sierra Madre – Support for Ongoing Enforcement and Request for Timely Abatement

CAUTION: This message is from an EXTERNAL SENDER - be CAUTIOUS, particularly with links and attachments.

Sierra Madre City Council

232 W. Sierra Madre Blvd.

Sierra Madre, CA 91024

Re: 281 W. Carter Ave., Sierra Madre, CA 91024

Dear Mayor and Members of the City Council,

Thank you for the City's work to date on 281 W. Carter Ave. My understanding is that staff has already completed inspections/reports and the matter is now in an enforcement phase. I am writing to (1) support that enforcement effort and (2) document the specific, practical public-safety concerns that continue to drive neighborhood urgency—particularly wildfire exposure and vector/nuisance conditions.

While neighbors are not pleased with the aesthetics or the property's rundown, non-maintained appearance, our primary concern is safety: the risk this property poses to nearby homes, children, and adjacent structures if a fire starts or embers enter the area, and the ongoing health impacts from standing water and pests.

Why this is urgent: neighborhood fire exposure is shared

The January 2025 fires (Eaton and Palisades) were a wake-up call for many of us. Observing the aftermath and comparing which homes survived and which burned reinforced a clear takeaway: **many homes ignite from embers rather than direct flame contact**, and those embers often originate from neighboring parcels and structures. In other words, defensible space is not only an individual homeowner responsibility—**one noncompliant property can materially increase the ignition risk for an entire block**.

Two key mechanisms are most relevant here:

- **Ember cast / ember travel:** if a nearby structure or fuel bed ignites, embers can land on roofs, decks, vents, gutters, and landscape beds—especially where leaf litter and debris accumulate.
- **Radiant heat transfer:** proximity of burning fuels (including structures, decks, and dense vegetation) can generate enough heat to ignite nearby materials even without flame contact.

Conditions at 281 W. Carter that amplify risk

Based on ongoing neighborhood observations (from public vantage points and common visibility), 281 W. Carter appears to remain on the far edge of nonconformance with basic “firescaping” and home-hardening principles. Conditions that significantly elevate risk include:

- **Heavy accumulation of dead/drying leaves and combustible debris** (in some areas appearing deep enough to act as a continuous fuel bed). This is the kind of material that can ignite from embers and behave like a fuse toward neighboring properties.
- **Roof and gutter vulnerability:** the roof appears extremely old, with visible leaf/branch accumulation in places—prime ember-catch locations that can become kindling.
- **Overhanging trees and ladder fuels near the structure:** branches near/over the roofline and dense vegetation close to the house increase ember capture and vertical fire spread potential.
- **Deck/observation area concerns:** the structure appears deteriorated in places (loose/failing materials). Decks are a known ignition point during ember events, and degraded components can worsen vulnerability.
- **Lack of defensible space and absence of effective fuel breaks:** there does not appear to be a maintained buffer around the structure, and the area between the 281 property and neighbors appears to contain dry, combustible material rather than a maintained firebreak.
- **Vegetation condition and irrigation:** the landscape appears dry and not actively maintained; irrigation appears non-existent or not being used. Our observation from fire aftermath is simple: **well-maintained, adequately hydrated landscapes generally perform better than older, parched, neglected fuel beds.**
- **Standing water / mosquito impacts:** neighbors continue to experience mosquito pressure consistent with standing water sources (e.g., buckets/containers) and there is community concern about what may be an unmaintained pool (not personally verified).
- **Obstructions / abandoned vehicles and stored items:** these reduce usable defensible space and can impede emergency access or safe suppression operations.

Firescaping principles not being met (examples)

To make this concrete, these are the basic principles that reduce ignition risk—and the ways the property appears to be failing them:

1. **Maintenance:** removal of dead/dry vegetation; cleaning roof/gutters; debris removal (currently a major concern).
2. **Defensible space:** establishing and maintaining a buffer around structures (appears absent).
3. **Plant spacing / ladder-fuel control:** spacing and pruning to prevent fire from “climbing” (appears not addressed).
4. **Vegetation management near structures:** eliminating overhanging branches and keeping fuels away from the house (appears not addressed).
5. **Irrigation / hydration:** maintaining plant moisture to reduce flammability (appears inactive).
6. **Firebreaks / hardscape interrupts:** use of noncombustible breaks (appears minimal/absent).
7. **Emergency access:** ensuring driveways/pathways are clear for responders (appears compromised by stored/abandoned items).

Request: continue enforcement to verified abatement and sustained compliance

Because this matter is already in enforcement, I respectfully request that the City maintain urgency and follow-through until the hazards are fully abated and verified. Specifically:

1. **Enforce a clear abatement timeline** for removal of leaf litter/debris, roof/gutter cleaning, hazardous vegetation reduction, and removal of combustibles near structures.
2. **Require objective verification** (re-inspection and documented closure criteria) rather than informal assurances.
3. **Address standing-water sources** as part of nuisance abatement and vector control.
4. **Ensure defensible space and fuel-break expectations are met and maintained**, not treated as a one-time cleanup.
5. If voluntary compliance continues to fail, **use the City's available enforcement tools** to reach a safety outcome that protects the neighborhood.

Many neighbors are hesitant to participate publicly due to prior negative experiences with the homeowner and concerns about retaliation. I respectfully ask the City to minimize the burden on individual residents where permitted and rely on staff-documented findings and objective conditions.

Thank you again for the work already underway. I am available to provide additional detail and photographs taken from public rights-of-way if helpful.

Respectfully,
Neighbors

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