



DATE: March 9, 2022

TO: Urban Forestry Board

FROM: Matthew Feisthamel, Forestry Coordinator

SUBJECT: Heritage Tree Appeal—251 Monroe Drive

RECOMMENDATION

Adopt a Resolution of the Urban Forestry Board of the City of Mountain View to Deny the Appeal, Uphold Staff’s Decision, and Approve the Removal of One Heritage Tree at 251 Monroe Drive, to be read in title only, further reading waived (Attachment 1 to the memorandum)..

BACKGROUND

Article II, Protection of the Urban Forest, Sections 32.22 through 32.39, of the Mountain View City Code (MVCC or Code), was established to preserve large trees (Heritage trees) within the City of Mountain View. The preservation program contributes to the welfare and aesthetics of the community and retains the great historical and environmental value of these trees. The Code requires a permit be obtained prior to removal of a Heritage tree, and City staff, under the authority granted in the Code to the Community Services Director, has been designated to review and approve, conditionally approve, or deny removal permit applications. Under the Code, there are specific criteria for removal of a Heritage tree. The determination on each application is based upon a minimum of one of the conditions set forth in the Code (Attachment 2).

The MVCC, Section 32.31, allows any person aggrieved or affected by a decision on a requested removal to appeal the decision by written notice within 10 calendar days after the notice of the decision is posted or mailed.

Heritage Tree Removal Request

An application to remove one *Pinus pinea* tree, commonly known as, and herein referred to as, Italian stone pine, at 251 Monroe Drive was submitted by the property owner on January 24, 2022 (Attachment 3).

On the application, the property owner marked two of the boxes (the condition of the tree and the nature and qualities of the tree) under reasons for removal for consideration of the tree, as well as providing comments stating, “Pine tree causing home foundation problems.”

Staff approved the removal of the Italian stone pine (Attachment 3). Notice of the City’s decision was posted on January 26, 2022 (Attachment 4).

The property owner was previously issued a Heritage Tree Removal Permit for the Italian stone pine on January 2, 2018, based on poor structure, included bark, and heavy lean over the home. The property owner decided to not remove the tree during the two-year permit timeline, and the removal permit expired on January 2, 2020. The applicant reapplied for the tree on January 24, 2022.

An appeal was filed on February 3, 2022 by a Mountain View resident for the January 2022 approval, citing reasons, including the tree is healthy and provides both habitat to numerous animal and bird species as well as cooling shade to the pavement below (Attachment 5).

ANALYSIS

The Italian stone pine is a pine tree native to the Mediterranean region and southern Europe. It is widely planted throughout the world as ornamental trees and used for their edible pine nuts.

Italian stone pines can grow up to a height of 80’, but 40’ to 60’ is more typical. Staff estimates this Italian stone pine tree to be around 50’ tall and approximately 60 years old, with a spread around 80’.

Staff’s Evaluation

When evaluating Heritage tree removal applications, staff considers if the reason(s) for removal on the application matches what is observed in the field. If the reason(s) meet the criteria, staff evaluates whether issue(s) regarding the tree can be reasonably mitigated.

The Italian stone pine is growing inside a private fenced front yard of a single-family residence at 251 Monroe Drive. The property owner indicated that the pine tree (Figure 1) is causing foundation issues. Staff inspected areas of concern inside and outside of the home and determined that it is unlikely that the pine tree is causing foundation or structural issues to the home.



Figure 1: Pine Tree Under Review

However, despite the unlikelihood of the tree causing foundation problems, staff approved the removal of the Italian stone pine based on the poor structure of the branches, lean over the home, codominant trunks, and severity of the included bark.



Figure 2: Codominant Trunk

The canopy is formed by two large codominant trunks (Figure 2). The tree has included bark at the union which puts the tree at greater risk of trunk failure, with potential impacts to the neighboring street and homes.



Figure 3: Lean Over Residence

One of the Italian stone pine trunks has a lean over the nearby residence at 251 Monroe Drive. Staff has concerns for public safety due to the heavy weight of the tree trunk and the angle of attachment of the limbs over the single-family home (Figure 3).

Staff's decision to approve the removal of the tree is solely based on the condition of the tree.

URBAN FORESTRY BOARD

The Parks and Recreation Commission serves as the Urban Forestry Board (Board) for Heritage tree appeals under MVCC Section 32.26. The Board must consider whether to uphold staff's decision and deny the appeal and/or overturn that decision using the criteria set forth in MVCC Section 32.35. The Board must support its decision with written findings. Staff has provided the Board with a draft resolution with findings upholding staff's decision to approve the removal of the Italian stone pine (Attachment 1). If the Board overturns the staff's decision and denies the removal of the Italian stone pine, staff recommends the Board make their findings orally, and staff will include the findings and decision in this meeting's written minutes.

SUMMARY

Staff recommends denying the appeal and allowing the Italian stone pine tree to be removed.

MF/AF/4/CSD

226-03-09-22M

- Attachments:
1. Resolution
 2. Mountain View City Code, Article II, Protection of Urban Forest
 3. HT Application for Removal Permit
 4. HT Posting Notice
 5. HT Appeal Letter