



MEMORANDUM

Community Services Department

DATE: August 12, 2020

TO: Urban Forestry Board

FROM: Jakob Trconic, Forestry and Roadway Manager
John R. Marchant, Community Services Director

SUBJECT: Heritage Tree Appeal – 99 East Middlefield Road

RECOMMENDATION

Deny the appeal, uphold staff’s decision, and allow removal of the *Pinus radiata* (Monterey pine) trees.

BACKGROUND

Article II, Protection of the Urban Forest, Sections 32.22 through 32.39 of the Mountain View City Code (MVCC), 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 Parks and Open Space Manager, under the authority granted in the Code to the Community Services Director, has been designated as the primary decision-maker in these matters. 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 following conditions:

1. The condition of the tree (with respect to age of the tree relative to the life span of that particular species), disease, infestation, general health, damage, public nuisance, danger of falling, proximity to existing or proposed structures, and interference with utility services;
2. The necessity of the removal of the Heritage tree in order to construct improvements and/or allow reasonable and conforming use of the property when compared to other similarly situated properties;

3. The nature and qualities of the tree as a Heritage tree, including its maturity, its aesthetic qualities such as its canopy, its shape and structure, its majestic stature, and its visual impact on the neighborhood;
4. Good forestry practices, including, but not limited to, the number of healthy trees a given parcel of land will support, the planned removal of any tree nearing the end of its life cycle, and the replacement of young trees to enhance the overall health of the urban forest; or
5. Balancing criteria: In addition to the criteria referenced above, which may support removal, the decision-maker shall also balance the request for removal against the following, which may support or mitigate against removal:
 - a. The topography of land and effect of the requested removal on erosion, soil retention, water retention, and diversion or increased flow of surface waters;
 - b. The effect of the requested removal on the remaining number, species, size, and location of existing trees on the site and in the area; or
 - c. The effect of the requested removal with regard to shade, noise buffers, protection from wind damage and air pollution, and the effect upon the historic value, scenic beauty, health, safety, prosperity, and general welfare of the area and the City as a whole.

The decision-maker shall consider additional criteria, if applicable, in weighing the decision to remove a Heritage tree, with the emphasis on the intent to preserve Heritage trees.

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 ten (10) calendar days after the notice of the decision is posted or mailed.

HERITAGE TREE REMOVAL REQUEST

An application submitted by Sharon Hayes, President of the Mountain Brook Homeowners Association, to remove three Heritage-sized Monterey pine trees was received on November 6, 2019. The criteria for removal listed related to the condition of the tree with respect to age and the nature and qualities of the tree, and the comment section states the following: “Trees are infested with bark beetles, neighboring tree of same species experienced a significant branch failure. Trees are hazardous.” A decision to approve the removal of the three Monterey pine trees was posted on January 9, 2020.

An appeal was filed by John Hearn on January 22, 2020 (Attachment 1).

ANALYSIS

***Pinus Radiata* (Monterey Pine) Tree Facts**

Pinus radiata (Monterey pine), insignis pine, or radiata pine is a species of pine native to the central coast of California and Mexico (Guadalupe Island and Cedros Island).

It is native to three very limited areas located in Santa Cruz, Monterey Peninsula, and San Luis Obispo Counties. *Pinus radiata* is a versatile, fast-growing, medium-density softwood suitable for a wide range of uses. It is often considered a model for growers of other plantation species. It is the most widely planted pine in the world, valued for rapid growth and desirable lumber and pulp qualities.

It faces serious threats in its natural range, due to the introduction of pine pitch canker (*Fusarium circinatum*). When trees begin to die of the disease, they attract bark beetles which provide a pathway for infection of other trees. In some stands, 80 percent to 90 percent of trees are infected. The fungus causes infections (lesions) that can encircle (or girdle) branches, exposed roots, and the main stems (trunks) of pine trees. The tips of girdled branches wilt as a result of obstructed water flow, causing needles to turn yellow and then brown. The fascicles (needle clusters) eventually fall off, leaving bare branch ends. Multiple branch infections can cause extensive die-back in the crown of the tree and may lead to tree mortality. Bark beetles are common pests of conifers (such as pines), and some attack broadleaf trees. The most common species infesting pines in urban landscapes and at the wildland-urban interface in California are the engraver beetles, the red turpentine beetle, and the western pine beetle.

Pinus radiata is a coniferous evergreen tree growing to 50' to 100' tall in the wild but up to 200' in cultivation in optimum conditions with upward-pointing branches and a rounded top. The needles are bright green in clusters of three (two in var. *binata*), slender, 3" to 6" long and with a blunt tip. The cones are 3" to 6 1/2" long, brown, ovoid (egg-shaped), and usually set asymmetrically on a branch, attached at an oblique angle. The bark is fissured and dark grey to brown. When not cut short by disease or harvesting, it has a lifespan of 80 to 90 years.

Staff's Evaluation

When evaluating Heritage Tree Removal Applications, staff looks to see if the reason(s) for removal on the application match what is observed in the field. If the reason(s) meet

the criteria, staff looks to see if issue(s) regarding the tree can be reasonably mitigated. Based on inspection and evaluation of the Monterey pine trees, along with an arborist report provided by the property's homeowners association, staff approved the removal for the following reasons:

Tree No. 1

- Tree No. 1 is on the east side of the courtyard. Staff could not see signs of turpentine beetle in the trunk of this tree. Staff estimates the trees were planted when the property was first constructed in 1969, and, so, they are approximately 50 years old.



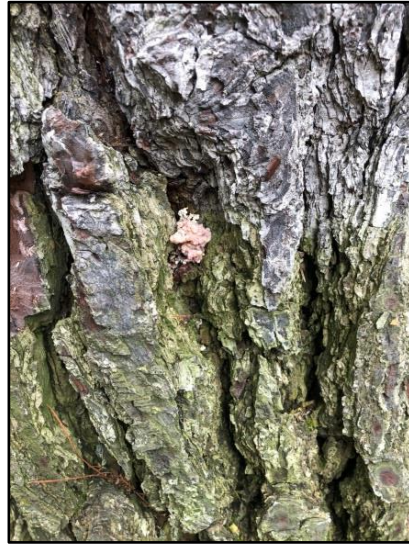
- The upper canopy of the tree is heavily weighted towards one side of the tree and has two areas where the tree has codominance in some of the upper branches. When two branches are of equal size, the attachment at this location tends to be not as strong as a branch that is one-half or less in size as the main branch.



- The tree appears to be in fair health, although the canopy is not as full as a tree in good health. For a courtyard tree, it would be better to have a tree that has good form, is in good health, and does not exhibit the lean and canopy weighting to one side.

Tree No. 2

- This tree is just southwest of Tree No. 1 in the courtyard. It has signs of turpentine beetle. The best indicators of red turpentine beetle attack on pines are: large pink-white pitch tubes on the lower trunk; accumulations of reddish-brown sawdust at the base of the tree and in bark crevices; and accumulations of cream- to pink-colored crystallized resin granules at the tree base. Galleries extend downward from the entry and may even extend into large roots. The number of generations varies from one to two years in the coldest portions of its range to two to three generations per year in the warmest areas. Attacks are made in the lower trunk area of pines. Attacks occur throughout warm weather but peak by midsummer. Through repeated attacks, this beetle can kill trees; however, more often it weakens trees, predisposing them to fatal attack by other bark beetle species.



- This tree has codominance in the main trunk starting at about 8' off the ground (see arrow, below). When two main trunks are of equal size, the attachment at this location tends to be weak. The angle of attachment is also high, predisposing this location for a major branch failure along with some included bark. A branch should be one-half or less in size as the main branch. The trunk canopies are weighted to one side likely due to competition from the tree that was removed last year due to a major branch failure from a tree that was next to this tree.



- The tree is entering a state of decline with several dead branches and a thinning canopy. This lopsided tree is likely subject to added wind dynamics with the loss of the other nearby tree that had the failure and was removed, and, with the codominance and canopy imbalance, it is not a good tree to have in a courtyard. Some flagging of pine needles can also be seen indicating other health, beetle, or other insect issues.



Tree No. 3

- This tree is on the west side of the courtyard and has signs of turpentine beetle. This tree has codominance in the main trunk at about 10'.



- The canopy is weighted to one side, and the tree is in decline. One side of the codominant trunks is basically dead, and after removal, the tree will still be heavily weighted to one side and be susceptible to wind dynamics based on the loss of the tree in the courtyard mentioned above.



Tree Nos. 2 and 3 have the turpentine beetle and will continue to support the development of more insects that will eventually leave the tree and search for new places to colonize with a mass exodus once the tree is dead. Currently both trees are showing initial signs of entry and infestation of the pest. This is on top of the structural issues with codominant stems and lopsided canopies.

Due to the type of insect, it is impossible to treat the trees once they are inside the tree. Some chemicals can help prevent the turpentine beetle from entering a tree, but once established, the only option is removal to prevent more insects from developing.

Tree No. 1 does not have the turpentine beetle but does have structural issues, a lean and a lopsided canopy, that do not make it a good candidate to be retained in a courtyard area where the structures and pedestrians are likely targets in the event of branch or tree failure at the codominant locations or due to a lopsided canopy.

URBAN FORESTRY BOARD

The Parks and Recreation Commission (PRC) serves as the Urban Forestry Board (Board) for Heritage tree appeals under MVCC Section 32.26. The Board must consider whether to deny the appeal and uphold staff's decision or overturn that decision using the aforementioned 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 (Attachment 4) with findings upholding staff's decision to remove the Heritage trees. If the Board overturns staff's decision and denies removal of the Heritage tree, 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 the appeal be denied and the *Pinus radiata* (Monterey pine) trees be allowed to be removed due to their condition.

JT-JRM/6/CSD/221-07-08-20M

- Attachments:
1. Redacted Appellant Letter
 2. Redacted Heritage Tree Application
 3. Arborist Report on Pine Trees
 4. Resolution

cc: F/c