



CITY OF MOUNTAIN VIEW

MEMORANDUM

Community Services Department

DATE: February 14, 2018

TO: Urban Forestry Board

FROM: Jakob Trconic, Parks Section Manager

SUBJECT: Heritage Tree Appeal – 99 Eldora Drive

RECOMMENDATION

Deny the appeal and allow three redwood trees and one palm tree to be removed.

FISCAL IMPACT – None.

BACKGROUND

Article II, Protection of the Urban Forest, Sections 32.22 through 32.38 of the City Code, was established to preserve large trees within the City which are growing on private or public lands. 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 Service Director, has been designated as the enforcement agent in this matter. Under the Code, there are specific criteria for removal. The determination on each application is based upon a minimum of one of the following conditions. 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.

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 such as, but not limited to, the number of healthy trees a given parcel of land will support and 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.
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.
 - 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 and scenic beauty and the health, safety, prosperity, and general welfare of the area and the City as a whole.

Also within the Code Section 32.31, an appeals process has been included that states:

“Any person aggrieved or affected by a decision on a requested removal may appeal the decision by filing a written notice of appeal with the city clerk stating the grounds for the appeal, and paying the requisite appeal fee, as established by council resolution, within ten (10) calendar days after the notice of the decision is posted or mailed.”

HERITAGE TREE REMOVAL REQUEST

An application submitted by Philip Walters to remove three Heritage-sized *Sequoia sempervirens* (Coast redwood) trees and one *Washingtonia filifera* (California fan palm) was received on November 21, 2017. The criteria for removal was listed in the comment section for the palm was conforming use and for the redwoods, conforming use and good forestry. The boxes were checked for: Necessity to remove the tree(s) to construct improvements and good forestry. A decision to approve the removal of the redwoods and the California fan palm was posted on December 8, 2017.

An appeal was filed on December 14, 2017 for the trees by Debora Olenov. The appeal letter states: “I am protesting this is because the very large Redwood Tree across the street was cut down and there will only be one large tree remaining on Eldora. The letter questions the reasoning for the decision because the telephone and electrical poles are on the other side of the street. The question is asked about moving pipes to resolve any issues verses the need to remove trees. Repaving would seem to be a solution for the cracks and lifting in the driveway.” It concludes with a desire to retain trees because they do not have a voice.

ANALYSIS

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 redwood trees and the palm tree, the appeal should be denied.

***Sequoia sempervirens* (Coast redwood)**

- Coast redwoods typical native range is a narrow strip of land approximately 470 miles in length and 5 to 47 miles in width along the Pacific coast of North America; the most southerly grove is in Monterey County, California, and the most northerly groves are in extreme southwestern Oregon. They usually grow in the mountains where precipitation from the incoming moisture off the ocean is greater. Coalescence of coastal fog accounts for a considerable part of the trees’ water needs. It is an evergreen, long-lived, monoecious tree living 1,200 to 1,800 years or more in its native areas. Trees grown in an urban environment do not attain the same size and height as trees in their native ranges. Staff estimates the redwood trees to be around 40 years old and the tallest leader to be around 75’ tall.
- The trees were likely installed originally to provide screening between the neighboring properties driveways. Redwoods are often planted because they are fast growers and can provide a quick screen. The application was submitted for three redwood trees but they are basically two codominant stemmed trees. The trees likely were cut, physically damaged, or damaged by frost at some point in the past and they regrew from a standard single leader redwood to their present state as trees with codominant leaders. The codominant stems are problematic because the location between the two leaders forms a weak attachment. The areas between the leaders have included bark and have a high angle of attachment. These two factors can contribute to a high potential for failure because as the

weight and size of the trunks increase, they put further stress on the reduced strength of the holding wood at the site of inclusion.

- The trees have grown to a size that the base of the trees are causing the lifting of the driveway verses a specific root or roots that are doing the lifting. This is important because root pruning to mitigate current or future damage is not feasible because it is the root plate that is causing the lifting. Redwoods are often placed in locations where their eventual size outgrows the planting space. Staff would advise against shaving the root plate to achieve a depth to pour a new driveway because this could be detrimental to tree health and would likely result in regrowth of shoots and new roots that would likely damage a new driveway in two to three years. The root plate is also lifting the surrounding soil and has changed the grade so that water now flows towards the corner of the garage instead of away from the structure as it should. This is bad from standard grading practices because water should move away from the foundation of the home.
- The trees are planted directly over the PG&E gas service line to the home. In the event the service line to the home were to have an issue with a leak, it would be very difficult to reestablish service to the home because of the location of the redwood trees.
- The City has a streetlight pole near the edge of the sidewalk and the trees are impacting the light with the canopy continually growing and blocking the light and the effects of the growing root plate and the potential negative effects on the base of the pole and wiring. This is another factor in the location being inappropriate for the eventual size of the trees.
- The appeal letter referenced the loss of another large redwood tree across the street. This work was performed by PG&E based on the proximity of the tree to the overhead high voltage wiring. The tree had to be removed based on their clearance requirements. This tree was also unfortunately planted in an inappropriate location for its inevitable size.

***Washingtonia filifera* (California fan palm)**

- California fan palm are native to California to Arizona. They are typically found in desert settings in their native range and grow near springs or other locations with adequate moisture levels. They typically grow to 60' tall and have a canopy that can reach approximately 20' wide. Trees in their native range can live for 500 years but in an urban setting 100 to 150 years would be more likely. Staff estimates this California palm to be approximately 50 years old.

- The tree appears to be in poor health with a thin and drooping canopy.
- The tree was planted in close proximity to the driveway and over the course of time has grown out into the driveway and is impeding the garage access. Currently, the tree is growing over the concrete on the pathway to the home and has reached the edge of the circular cutout that was provided in the last driveway repour that occurred some time in the past to provide room for the trunk to expand.

SUMMARY

Staff is of the opinion that the redwoods should be allowed to be removed due to the high potential for failure in the codominant stems, the location of the gas service line under the trees, and the negative impacts on the grading next to the garage. The palm tree is blocking the driveway access and is in poor health. Staff recommends that the appeal be denied and the trees be allowed to be removed.

JT/7/CSD
221-02-14-18M-E

Attachment: 1. Appeal Packet

cc: F/c