

DATE: June 17, 2026

TO: Urban Forestry Board

FROM: Russell Hansen, Urban Forest Manager

SUBJECT: **Heritage Tree Removal Application Appeal—560 Franklin Street**

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 (1) Heritage Tree at 560 Franklin Street, 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 certain trees designated as 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 granting a permit to remove 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).

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 APPLICATION

An application to remove one (1) *Platanus x hispanica*, London Plane Tree (hereinafter referred to as "London Plane") at 560 Franklin Street was submitted by Kyle Smith ("Applicant") of Neovi home builders, on March 10, 2026 (Attachment 3). On the application, the Applicant marked two (2) of the boxes under reasons for removal for the consideration of the tree:

- "Tree is in poor health."
- "Tree removal is necessary to construct new improvements"

The Applicant also provided the following comments for consideration within the removal application:

"Tree is in poor health based on the arborist report and it is in the way of our proposed driveway and driveway approach design."

The London Plane was approved for a permit for removal by staff because it met the criteria under MVCC Section 32.35. Specifically, the approval set forth the following:

“Tree is located within proposed location of new driveway alignment of building permit #25-11295. Other alternate driveway locations and configurations were considered to preserve tree and were determined to be infeasible. Tree is located directly under high voltage power lines and has been pruned for utility line clearance creating a poor, V-shaped structure on the tree. Tree to be replaced with a more suitable species for under high voltage power lines.”

Notice of the City’s decision was posted on March 27, 2026 (Attachment 4).

An appeal (Attachment 5) was filed on April 3, 2026, by a Mountain View resident disputing staff’s findings and expressing concerns about the loss of a street tree, shade, wildlife, air quality and the lack of necessity for the removal.

Notice of the appeal was posted on April 27, 2026 (Attachment 5).

SPECIE PROFILE

PLATANUS X hispanica

The *Platanus x hispanica* London Plane is a hybrid cross between the American Sycamore (*Platanus occidentalis*) and the Oriental plane tree (*Platanus orientalis*), it can grow to a height of eighty feet (80) feet and provide as much as fifty (50) feet of canopy spread. The tree is tolerant of many forms of pollution and thrives in city environments.

The London Plane is susceptible to the recently introduced Invasive Shothole Borer, which can kill the tree. In addition, the tree can be subject to Anthracnose, Powdery Mildew, Scales, and Spider Mites.

STAFF’S EVALUATION

When evaluating Heritage tree removal applications, staff consider if the reason(s) for removal on the application match what is observed in the field and whether any of the criteria under Section 32.35 of the MVCC are met, with an emphasis on the intent to preserve heritage trees, as required by the City Code.

Platanus x hispanica

This London Plane is located in the planter strip (between the sidewalk and street) of the property and provides canopy cover to at least one (1) property. This London plane is considered a street tree because it is located within the Public Right of Way, within ten (10) feet of the roadway. As such, the City of Mountain View provides pruning services for this tree.

Staff estimate this London plane to be approximately thirty (30) feet tall with a spread of approximately thirty (30) feet and a diameter of twenty-four (24) inches. Overall, the canopy is in poor condition due to the inherent conflict between reduction pruning cuts for the necessary PG&E power line clearance and crown raising for vehicle clearance. Staff estimate the tree to be sixty (60) years old. The London plane is

a heritage tree under MVCC Sec. 32.23(c)(1) as its circumference is greater than forty-eight (48) inches in circumference when measured at fifty-four (54) inches above natural grade.

Staff's initial inspection of the London plane showed an overall limited canopy with poor structure and no pest or disease issues. There were no reports of prior large limb failures and the main branches of the tree away from the electrical lines contained overextended branches.

The property at 560 Franklin Street originally contained two London plane street trees. The northern London plane tree was cut down by a PG&E contractor in February 2025 without knowledge or approval from the property owner or City of Mountain View. Unfortunately, the applicant designed the new home and driveway to remove the southernmost tree and preserve the northernmost London plane. As that layout is no longer an option and redesigning around the remaining London plane would require extensive plan revisions resulting in additional costs and delays the applicant is hoping to remove the second tree and replant where the northern tree has already been removed.

The Applicant submitted building plans to demolish the existing single-family residence and build a new one-story prefabricated home with a one-car attached garage. It should also be noted that the building review for this project is based solely on ministerial review of the project, as it is a prefabricated structure already approved by the State.

The Applicant originally applied for removal of one Magnolia and one London plane on September 11, 2025. Staff rendered an approved decision for both trees, and the removal of the London plane was timely appealed on October 13, 2025. The Applicant conducted follow-up meetings with Forestry Staff and Public Works and determined the appeal hearing was several months in the future and the appeal would hold up the issuance of the building permit. As a result, the Applicant decided to rescind the portion of the heritage tree application related to the London plane on November 19, 2025, and the application was closed. After the application was closed, the building permit was issued and the contractor started work on the site.

The existing single car concrete driveway approach on site is approximately ten (10) feet wide and located along the property line with 570 Franklin Street. The Applicant is proposing to shift and expand the existing driveway approach to approximately fifteen (15) feet wide to align with the proposed Public Works approved parking pad on site according to the Proposed Driveway Plan (Attachment 6). Forestry Staff, Public Works Staff and the Applicant conducted meetings to confirm the proposed driveway design meets current codes and setbacks. The expanded driveway design will necessitate the removal of the London plane tree because the tree is entirely located within the proposed driveway approach. The owner desires a second paved parking spot on site, and the tree makes it difficult to exit the second off street parking location.

The issuance of the building permit allowed the construction of the foundation and wall panels for the new prefabricated home. For the panels to be brought on site, materials were staged on the adjacent neighbor's driveway at 550 Franklin Street, and a large crane relocated the panels to the property. The crane operator notified the City of Mountain View Forestry Division that two limbs of the London Plane (7" and 8") needed to be pruned to allow for necessary clearance for crane mobility. The limbs were pruned and canopy on the tree was reduced from these pruning cuts. Although the pruning cuts limited the canopy on the west side of the tree, the cuts were not considered excessive.

In looking at the criteria for removal under MVCC Sec. 32.35, staff's evaluation found the criteria were met, as follows:

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.

Staff's evaluation of the tree found that the condition of the tree required its removal, as its overall health is good, but structure is poor due to the power line clearance pruning.

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.

Staff's evaluation of the tree found the removal is necessary due to submitted building plans (BLDG #25-11295) and the tree being located within the proposed location of the new driveway.

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.

Staff's evaluation of the tree found that the structure of the canopy to be poor, therefore this criteria was met.

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.

Staff's evaluation of the tree found that the tree should be removed due to good forestry practices as the London plane is not appropriate under high voltage electric lines.

Representative Photos

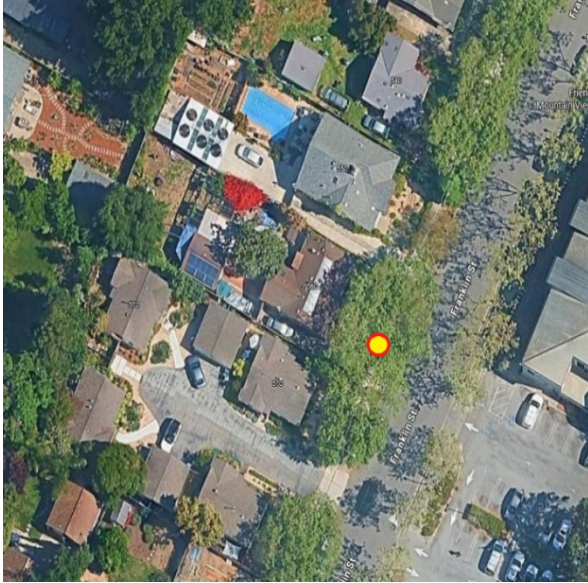
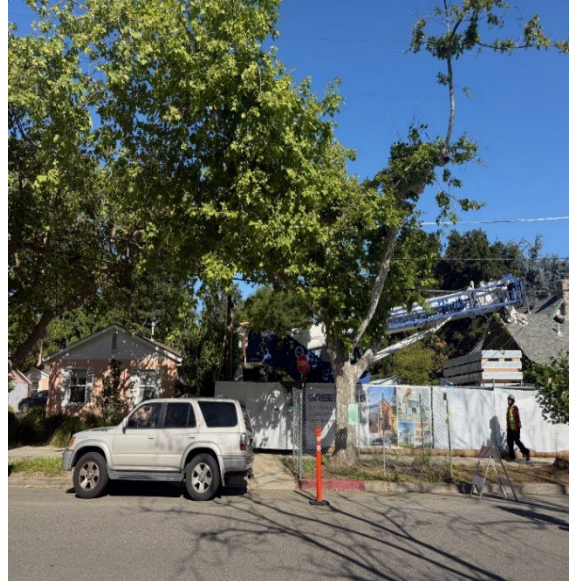


Photo #1 Aerial image showing tree of concern.



Photo#2 Streetside view of tree of concern.



Photo #3 Tree of concern looking north.



Photo #4 Tree of concern looking south.



Photo #5
Photo of pruning cuts May 2026



Photo #6
Photo of crane used to build home



Photo #7
Photo of home construction panels



Photo #8
Photo of PGE removed 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 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 one (1) Heritage Tree. If the Board overrules staff's decision and deny the removal of the one (1) 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 denying the appeal and approving the removal of the one (1) Heritage Tree.

~~RH/AF/4/CSD~~
~~228-10-09-24M~~

- Attachments:
1. Resolution
 2. Mountain View City Code, Article II, Protection of Urban Forest
 3. Heritage Tree Application for Removal Permit
 4. Heritage Tree Notice of Decision
 5. Heritage Tree Appeal and Notice
 6. Proposed Driveway Plan