

DATE: June 11, 2025

TO: Urban Forestry Board

FROM: Russell Hansen, Urban Forest Manager

SUBJECT: Heritage Tree Removal Application Appeal—1580 Meadow Lane

RECOMMENDATION

Adopt a Resolution of the Urban Forestry Board of the City of Mountain View to Deny the Appeal, Uphold Staff's Decision, and Deny the Removal of One (1) Heritage Tree at 1580 Meadow Lane, 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) *Cedrus deodara*, deodar cedar (hereinafter referred to as "cedar"), at 1580 Meadow Lane was submitted by the property owner on March 14, 2025

(Attachment 3). On the application, the property owner marked two (2) of the boxes under reasons for removal for the consideration of the tree:

- “Tree is in danger of falling.”; and
- “Tree is growing in close proximity to structures and causing damage (or will in the near future).”

The property owner also provided the following comment for the reason for the removal:

“Had arborist trim the branches aggressively to lower the stress and remove branches likely to fall. Unfortunately, the tree has continued dropping logs on our roof.”

The cedar tree was denied a permit for removal by staff, citing that prior pruning appears to be focused more on crown raising and thinning of interior growth rather than end-weight reduction and the ability to prune for limb end-weight reduction and reduce the potential for future limb failures. Further, the tree is located approximately twenty feet (20') from the residence, and no evidence of damage to the property was identified at the time of inspection. Notice of the City's decision was posted on April 1, 2025 (Attachment 4).

An appeal (Attachment 5) was filed on April 10, 2025 by Brad and Thuan Green (property owners) disputing staff's findings without providing additional supporting information.

Notice of the appeal was posted on April 11, 2025 (Attachment 6).

SPECIES PROFILE

The *Cedrus deodara*, deodar cedar, is a drought-tolerant conifer that is native to southern Asia but has been successfully planted in Europe, Canada, the United States, and South America. Deodar cedars can grow to a height of eighty feet (80') and have canopy spread of fifty feet (50').

While this species has only a limited number of pest and disease issues in our environment, they are not common or typically treatable. There is, however, a propensity for this species to drop large limbs as it matures given the typical elongated branching structure, but this can typically be mitigated through pruning for end-weight reduction.

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 and whether any of the criteria under Section 32.35 of the MVCC is met, with an emphasis on the intent to preserve Heritage trees, as required by the City Code.

Cedrus Deodara

This cedar is located in the front yard of the property line and provides canopy cover to two (2) properties. Staff estimates this cedar to be approximately seventy-five feet (75') tall with a spread of approximately thirty feet (30') and diameter of forty-six inches (46"). Overall, the canopy condition is good with the exception of less-than-ideal live crown ratio. Staff estimates the tree to be sixty (60) years old. The cedar is a Heritage tree under MVCC Section 32.23(c)(3) as its circumference is greater than twelve inches (12") in circumference when measured at fifty-four inches (54") above natural grade.

Initial inspection of the cedar showed an overall healthy tree with fair structure and no pest or disease issues currently. The cedar has previously had its crown/canopy raised to twenty-five feet (25') or more, reducing the live crown ratio to approximately 45%, which is below the ideal threshold of 60% or more of the stem occupied with foliage. While evidence of prior limb failures was included with the application, all photos show branches with limited branch caliper given their overall length, which increases the risk of future limb failures.

In looking at the criteria for removal under MVCC Section 32.35, staff's evaluation did not find any of the criteria 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 did not find that the condition of the tree required its removal as its overall health and structure is good, and there is no evidence of any nuisance, damage, or interference issues that cannot be addressed through corrective 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 did not find that removal of the Heritage tree was necessary in order to construct improvements because there are no improvements proposed.

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 tree and structure of the canopy is good; therefore, this criterion was not 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 did not find that the tree should be removed due to good forestry practices as no facts to support this criterion were provided or observed.

Representative Photos

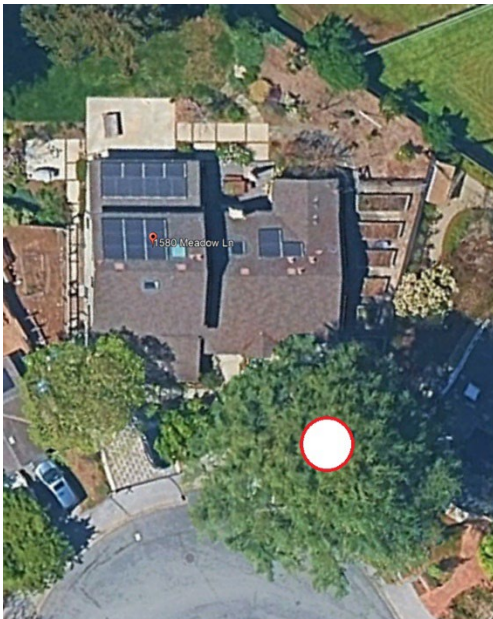


Figure 1: Aerial Image Showing Tree of Concern in Lower Right



Figure 2: Street View Which Shows the Tree of Concern from the Street



Figure 3 and Figure 4: Photos of Prior Limb Failures Which Reflect the Normal but Problematic Branch Elongation that Leads to Limb Failures When it is Not Adequately Addressed

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 deny the removal of the one (1) Heritage tree. If the Board overrules staff's decision and allows for 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 denying the removal of the one (1) Heritage tree.

RH/AF/6/CSD
224-06-11-25M
205304

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