

**DATE:** April 8, 2026

**TO:** Urban Forestry Board

**FROM:** Russell Hansen, Urban Forest Manager

**SUBJECT:** **Heritage Tree Removal Application Appeal—139 Easy Street**

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**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 two (2) Heritage Trees at 139 Easy 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 three Heritage trees, one of which is an Alder and two of which are *Sequoia sempervirens*, Coast Redwoods (hereinafter referred to as "Redwood") at 139 Easy Street was submitted by the Homeowners Association (HOA) property manager, Cindy Graver ("Applicant"), on November 07, 2025 (Attachment 3). Staff approved the removal of the Alder pursuant to MVCC Section 32.35(a)(1), and that decision has not been appealed and is not the subject of this hearing. The rest of the information provided refers to the two Redwoods only, as they are the subject of the appeal.

On the application, the Applicant marked the same one (1) box for both trees under reasons for considering removal. That box was as follows:

- "Tree is growing in close proximity to structures and causing damage (or will in the near future)."

The Applicant also provided the following information on the application for consideration:

“Redwood roots raised concrete slab foundation and cost homeowner about \$20,000 to remove, then re-pour slab foundation. Bay Area Tree says it will happen again if trees are not removed. The only option would be to dig a large trench between trees and 139 Easy, but per Bay Area Tree, Ken Ohm, such a trench would de-stabilize trees.”

The Redwood trees were denied a permit for removal by staff because it did not meet the criteria for removal under MVCC Sec. 32.25. Specifically, the denial notice set forth the following:

“Healthy canopy without signs of decline. Trunk is located approximately 9 feet away from the home structure. A retaining wall is located approximately 5 feet away from the trunk. According to the applicant, tree roots from an unknown tree impacted the concrete slab foundation and walkway. Concrete slab and walkway have been repaired and no significant decline found in canopy after the work was completed. No current damage was provided or found on site. It appears root pruning is a viable option to prevent potential future damage to walkway and foundation. Does not meet ordinance criteria for removal.”

Notice of the City’s decision was posted on January 12, 2026 (Attachment 4).

The reasons for removal from the Applicant were based on a submitted arborist report which accompanied the Heritage tree application (Attachment 3). The arborist report was prepared by Bay Area Tree Specialists. The report contained photos of several moderately sized roots growing towards and under the foundation. The arborist in the report found that “the Redwoods have outgrown the design of the Planter Bed/Retaining Wall.” The arborist report also found that “The saturated soil with standing water “has promoted Large Rooting into the Property and House” and that “this is a longstanding problem that is difficult to correct.” He provided three options for the trees.

- 1.) Extensive root pruning outside of the house and monitoring.
- 2.) Removal of 2 Redwoods, 1 peach, and stumps/roots.
- 3.) Monitoring roots and accepting the future damage by roots.

The arborist report mentioned multiple four (4) inch diameter roots present at the front door and multiple roots (unknown size) found in the living room but only one (1) two (2) inch diameter root was found in the kitchen area after trenching. Photos of the excavation under the foundation were provided but it is the belief of City staff that the smaller root diameters of two to three (2-3) inches in the photos and the depth of the roots are unlikely to be the primary cause of damage to the foundation.

Redwood tree #1 is located approximately fifteen (15) feet to the garage structure of 139 Easy Street and Redwood tree #2 is located approximately nine (9) feet away from the home structure of 139 Easy Street. Based on the distances of the Redwoods to the home and garage structure, it is unlikely large diameter roots were located under the structures. Root pruning appears to be viable option to protect the home structure while maintaining the trees on site, staff recommend the tree roots to be pruned approximately twenty-four (24) inches away from the structure.

City staff do not know the exact reasons for the damage to the concrete slab as repairs were completed prior to application for removal.

Notice of the City's decision was posted on January 12, 2026 (Attachment 4).

An appeal (Attachment 5) was filed on January 16, 2026 by Blake Freeman ("Appellant"). Appellant provided an email setting forth the reasons for the appeal, which include assertions that the Redwoods tree roots raised and cracked 139 Easy Street slab foundation and cracked tiles inside the unit, that he witnessed a severely tilted living room floor and a crowned kitchen floor with cracked tiles, and that he is certain the Redwoods' tree roots caused the problem because they are the only large trees in the area, with verification of such from the excavation and arborist reports (Attachment 5).

Notice of the appeal was posted on January 26, 2026 (Attachment 5).

### **SPECIE PROFILE**

#### **SEQUOIA SEMPERVIRENS**

The *Sequoia sempervirens* Coast Redwood is a tree native to the coastal mountain range of Northern California and Oregon, where they can grow to a height of two hundred (200) feet and provide as much as one hundred (100) feet of canopy spread. In the urban environment, however, they typically only reach heights of one hundred (100) feet and provide up to sixty (60) feet of canopy cover.

While this species has only a limited number of pest and disease issues and is hardy in its native range, it is known to be very drought-sensitive with warmer temperatures and limited coastal fog.

### **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.

#### **SEQUOIA SEMPERVIRENS**

These Redwood trees are located in the front yard HOA-maintained planter area bordering the home at 139 Easy Street. The Redwood trees provide canopy cover to at least two (2) properties (139 Easy Street and 137 Easy Street). Staff estimates these Redwoods to be approximately sixty-five (60) feet tall with a spread of approximately twenty (20) feet and both with diameters of thirty-four (34) inches. Overall, the canopy is in good health with minimal decline. Staff estimates the trees to be sixty (40) years old. The Redwoods are considered heritage trees under MVCC Sec. 32.23(c)(3) as they are redwoods and their circumference is greater than twelve (12) inches when measured at fifty-four (54) inches above natural grade.

Staff's initial inspection of the Redwoods showed an overall healthy canopy with good structure and no pest or disease issues. The Redwoods have previously had their canopies raised to approximately twelve

(12) feet, but the live crown ratio would be considered good. There were no reports of prior large limb failures.

Staff did not have the opportunity to examine the cracked foundation or roots under the home but roots near the front entryway and near the base of a retaining wall were found on site. Staff recommends the surface roots near the front entryway to the home be pruned to reduce the possibility of damage to the structure.

While staff are aware of the potential damage to the foundation from tree roots, the arborist report lacked photos of the cracked foundation or large surface roots under the foundation. The photo of the cracked tiles does not clearly demonstrate a lifted and/or cracked foundation. In addition, the photo of the profile of the slab foundation appears to demonstrate a six (6) inch to eight (8) inch concrete foundation and it is unlikely roots of the sizes in the arborist report (two (2) inch to three (3) inches) would solely cause the type of damage in the report.

In looking at the criteria for removal under MVCC Sec. 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 root pruning or other means.

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 and the tree provides significant value and benefit to the neighborhood, therefore this criteria 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 trees did not find that the trees should be removed due to good forestry practices as no facts to support this criteria were provided or observed.

**Representative Photos**



**Photo #1**  
Aerial image showing trees of concern.



**Photo #2**  
Streetview which shows the trees of concern from Easy Street.



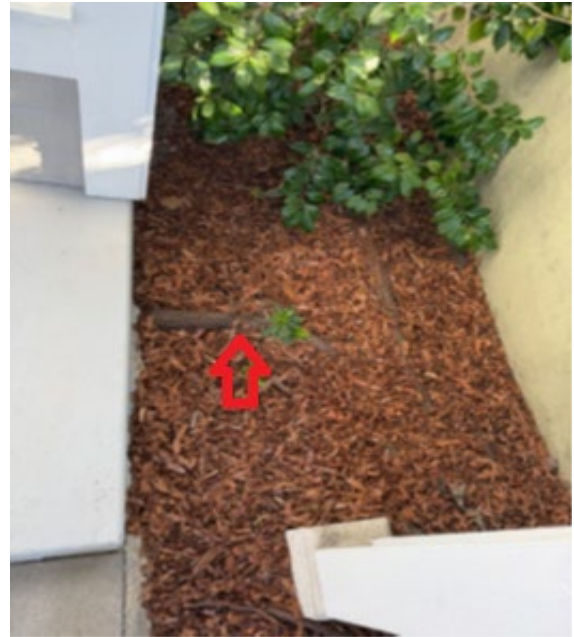
**Photo #3**  
Photo of the trees looking North.



**Photo #4**  
Photo of the tree facing southeast



**Photo #5**  
Photo of the entryway and Redwood trees



**Photo #6**  
Photo of approximate 3-inch surface root near entryway.



**Photo #7**  
Photo of approximate 4-inch surface root near retaining wall.



**Photo #8**  
Photo of backside of planter area bordering garden wall with window.

**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 two (2) Heritage Trees. If the Board overrules staff's decision and allows for removal of the two (2) Heritage Trees, staff recommends the Board make their findings orally, and staff will include the findings and decision in this meeting's written minutes.

**SUMMARY**

Staff recommend denying the appeal and denying the removal of the two (2) Heritage Trees.

~~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 and Arborist Report for Removal Permit
  4. Heritage Tree Notice of Decision
  5. Heritage Tree Appeal and Notice