

DATE: June 17, 2026

TO: Urban Forestry Board

FROM: Russell Hansen, Urban Forest Manager

SUBJECT: **Heritage Tree Removal Application Appeal—2714 Preston Drive**

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 2714 Preston Drive, 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 for each application is based on at least 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 two (2) *Pinus radiata*, Monterey pine (hereinafter referred to as "Pine") at 2714 Preston Drive was submitted by Ty Williams of Urban Tree Management ("Applicant"), on March 3, 2026 (Attachment 3). On the application, the Applicant marked two (2) of the boxes under reasons for removal for the consideration of the tree #1:

- "Tree is in poor health"
- "Tree is diseased with pests, insects, and/or beetles"
- "Tree is near the end of the life span"
- "Tree removal is necessary to construct new improvements"

(Note: The Applicant later clarified that no new improvements are proposed on site and that box was checked in error.)

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

- "Tree is dying from bark beetle infestation."

This Pine tree was approved for removal by staff because it met the criteria under MVCC Section 32.25. Specifically, that it was infested with Beetles and near the end of its life span.

On the application, the Applicant marked two (2) of the boxes under reasons for removal for the consideration of the tree #2:

- “Tree is dead”
- “Tree removal is necessary to construct new improvements”
(Note: The Applicant later clarified that no new improvements are proposed on-site and that the box was checked in error.)

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

- “Tree is dead.”

The Pine tree was denied a permit for removal by staff because it did not meet the criteria under MVCC Section 32.35. Specifically, the denial notice set forth the following:

“Tree without major signs of decline or drought stress. Tree is located next to a neighboring pine tree approximately 8 feet away. Canopy has been reduced from growing towards the home and neighboring property. Recommend limiting future pruning to allow for future growth of the canopy. Minimal evidence of bark beetle attacks were found on tree. Boring insect holes were identified on two roots (2", 3"), but the majority of the exposed roots did not contain insect damage. Careful removal of the neighboring pine tree is unlikely to impact tree. Does not meet ordinance criteria for removal.”

Notice of the City’s decision was posted on April 1, 2026 (Attachment 4).

An Appeal (Attachment 5) was filed on April 7, 2026, by the Applicant disputing staff’s findings and expressing concerns about a bark beetle infestation.

An Arborist Letter (Attachment 5) was included with the submission of the appeal. The Arborist Letter included the following observations and assessments:

Both trees were infested with Red Turpentine bark beetles. The tree on the right (tree #2) has a major infestation. Tree on left (tree #1) has less infestation, but the beetle is there.

Staff identified evidence of bark beetle frass on both trees, but tree #1 showed significantly less damage, with only one section of the lower trunk exhibiting evidence.

The Arborist Letter (Attachment 5) additionally stated:

“Tree #1 is still in decent visible health but is in decline from the beetle infestation. The tree needs to be removed as well.”

Staff does not agree with the claim that tree #1 needs to be removed at this time. The canopy of the Pine did not appear to contain any major dieback or dead branches that usually result from a bark beetle attack. Bark beetle populations can fluctuate based on many factors, including seasonal weather, condition and care of the tree. While staff cannot predict whether the population of bark beetles on-site will increase or decrease over time, they believe it is premature to remove the tree at this time.

The Arborist Letter (Attachment 5) additionally stated:

“My concern is that removing only tree#2 will expose tree#1 to more beetles, leading to the tree’s death later this year. This could bring unnecessary costs for the homeowner by not having both trees removed at the same time.”

Staff disagree with the claim that removing only tree #2 will expose tree #1 to more beetles. In staff’s opinion, if tree #2 is removed on a timely basis, it will reduce the potential spread of beetles to tree #1. Beetles can remain in infected wood, and removing tree #2 would likely benefit tree #1. While staff understands the costs would increase with two separate removal timelines, they believe tree #1 may remain in good condition for several years, providing continued benefit to the community.

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

SPECIE PROFILE

PINUS RADIATA

The *Pinus radiata* Monterey Pine is a tree native to only five (5) small populations; three (3) in coastal California and two (2) in Mexican islands. The trees can grow to a height of fifty (50) to one hundred (100) feet and provide as much as sixty (60) feet of canopy spread. In the urban environment, however, they typically only reach heights of seventy (70) feet and provide up to forty (40) feet of canopy spread.

While this species has limited impacts of pests and diseases when grown in a cooler, coastal environment, it is known to be susceptible to bark beetles, pine pitch canker, and western gall rust when grown in inland environments.

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.

***Pinus radiata* #2**

This Pine is in the backyard of a private single-family residence. The tree provides canopy cover to at least two (2) properties within the neighborhood. This Pine is considered a private tree because it is located outside the public right-of-way within a fenced backyard. As such, the property owner is responsible for the pruning of this tree. Staff estimate this Pine to be approximately seventy (70) feet tall with a spread of approximately twenty (20) feet and a diameter of thirty-eight (38) inches. Overall, the canopy is in good health, and the live crown ratio is slightly lower for the species due to previous pruning of the lateral branches. Staff estimate the tree to be fifty (50) years old. The Pine is a Heritage tree under MVCC Sec. 32.23(c)(3) 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 Pine showed an overall healthy canopy with good structure, minimal pest, and no disease issues identified. The Pine has previously had its lateral branches reduced in length on the east and west sides. There were no reports of prior large limb failures.

Pines can perform well in Mountain View with favorable weather conditions and supplemental irrigation provided during the summer season. Staff recommend increasing irrigation and adding mulch around the base of the Pine to improve the tree's condition.

Staff understand that the Pine may experience an increase in bark beetle attacks and noticeable signs of decline over time. However, if that occurs, the property owner can submit a new application citing a material change in circumstances under MVCC Sec. 32.31(e).

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 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. The Applicant acknowledged that this box was checked in error on the original application.

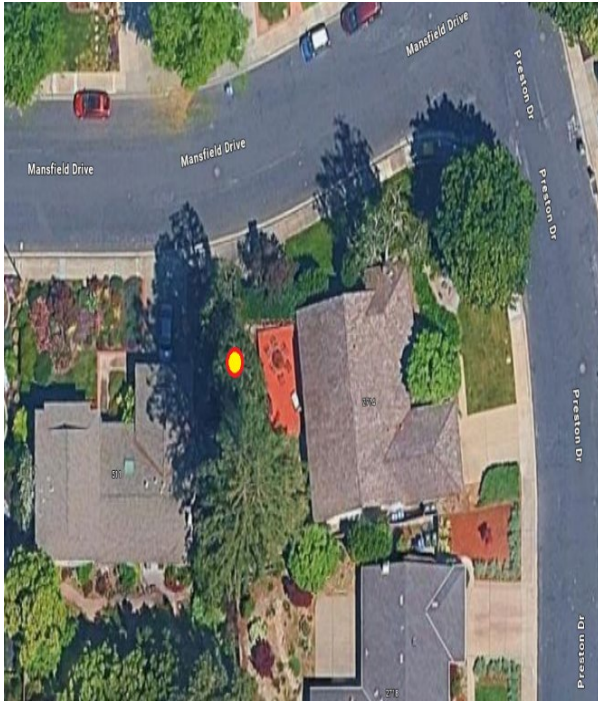
3. The nature and qualities of the tree as a heritage tree, including its maturity, its aesthetic qualities such as its canopy, its shape and structure, its majestic stature, and its visual impact on the neighborhood.

Staff's evaluation of the tree found that the tree and structure of the canopy are 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 tree did not find that the tree 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 tree of concern.



Photo #2
View of tree looking southwest



Photo #3
View of tree looking northwest



Photo#4
View of tree from sidewalk on Mansfield Drive



Photo #5
Photo of tree roots with some boring insect activity



Photo #6
Photo of bark beetle pitch tubes

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/4/CSD
228-10-09-24M

- Attachments:
1. Resolution
 2. Mountain View City Code, Article II, Protection of Urban Forest
 3. Heritage Tree Application
 4. Heritage Tree Notice of Decision
 5. Heritage Tree Appeal and Arborist Letter