

DATE: June 10, 2026

TO: Urban Forestry Board

FROM: Russell Hansen, Urban Forest Manager

SUBJECT: **Heritage Tree Removal Application Appeal—500 W. Middlefield Road**

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 500 W. Middlefield, 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) *Sequoia sempervirens*, Coast Redwood (hereinafter referred to as "Redwood") at 500 W. Middlefield was submitted by Veena Thammavongsa with A Plus Tree LLC, on behalf of Common Interest Management Services ("Applicant"), on December 17, 2025 (Attachment 3). On the application, the applicant marked three (3) of the boxes under reasons for removal for the consideration of the tree:

- "Tree is in good or fair health"
- "Tree does not have proper growth space"
- "Tree is growing in close proximity to structures and causing damage (or will in the near future)."

The Applicant also provided the following comments from within their arborist report for consideration with the removal application:

“Tree 1, Coast Redwood, *Sequoia sempervirens* is outgrowing its space. The trunk presses against the wood patio fence, & root pruning for patio repairs will require cutting into the root collar & removing anchoring roots. If left unmitigated the tree will cause more damage to the fence.”

The Redwood 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:

“Healthy canopy without major signs of decline. Trunk flare is located approximately ten and one-half (10.5) feet from the foundation of building unit# 149. The patio of unit #149 contains concrete interlocking pavers, three (3) pavers were found to be uplifted up to one (1) inch, likely due to tree roots from tree, it appears roots can be pruned and pavers reset to create an even surface area. The root pruning necessary to complete repairs on patio is unlikely to impact health or stability of the tree. Trunk is growing on a slope between a wooden fence and driveway below, it appears area is adequate to support growth of tree. Trunk is located approximately four (4) inches to wooden fence; fence can be modified to accommodate tree growth if necessary. Does not meet ordinance criteria for removal.”

Notice of the City’s decision was posted on February 24, 2026 (Attachment 4).

An Appeal (Attachment 5) was filed on March 5, 2026, by the Applicant disputing staff’s findings and expressing concerns regarding the Redwood’s root impacts, future growth, cost to maintain and necessary future fence repairs. Staff’s responses to the points made in the appeal are included in “Staff’s Evaluation” below.

Notice of the appeal was posted on March 9, 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

This Redwood is located along a private, interior Homeowners Association (HOA) maintained driveway bordering the patio yard of unit #149 and the driveway. The tree provides canopy cover to at least two (2) units within the complex. This Redwood is considered a private tree because it is located within a privately maintained roadway. Staff estimates this Redwood to be approximately seventy (70) feet tall with a spread of approximately twenty (20) feet and diameter of thirty (30) inches. Overall, the canopy is in good health, and the live crown ratio is appropriate for the species. Staff estimate the tree to be fifty (50) years old. The Redwood is a heritage tree under MVCC Sec. 32.23(c)(3) as its circumference is greater than twelve (12) inches in circumference when measured at fifty-four (54) inches above natural grade.

Staff's initial inspection of the Redwood showed an overall healthy canopy with good structure and no pest or disease issues. The Redwood has previously had its canopy raised to approximately fifteen (15) feet for clearance above the nearby driveway and patio area. There were no reports of prior large limb failures.

Redwoods have increased tolerance of root pruning versus other species of trees and staff believe future root pruning in the patio area can be managed for several more years before significantly impacting the tree. Staff recommend increasing the irrigation within the common areas to promote root growth outside the patio to prepare for potential future root pruning within the patio area.

While staff understand the Redwood tree may impact the patio and the wooden fence in the future, if repairs are not possible without major impacts to the health and stability of the tree, the property owner can submit a new application citing a material change in circumstances under MVCC Sec. 32.31(e).

In response to the points made in the written appeal, the appeal provided a statement concerning root impacts. "Per the arborist from A Plus Tree, there is continued damage to the property due to the proximity of the tree and most importantly the main issue is that the alternative to removing the tree would be cutting the roots, which will destabilize the tree due to the difficult time of the tree recovering from root cutting". While staff did not have the opportunity to inspect the root system under the lifted pavers in the patio, staff believe careful, selective, root pruning is an option to preserve the Redwood while repairing the patio. Staff estimate the root pruning necessary to fix the lifted pavers and reset level again will impact less than ten (10) percent of the root system and is unlikely to cause major damage to the health or stability of the tree.

The appeal provided a statement with concerns of future impacts from the growth of the tree. "Given the assumed age of the tree, the trunk alone has a great potential to grow to 3 times in diameter. This will require excessive root pruning and will harm the health and stability of the tree". The current diameter of the tree is thirty (30) inches and has begun to impact the fence that separates the HOA common area and the private patio. It is staff's opinion that this conflict can be managed with creative modification of the fence. The tree is currently approximately ten and one-half (10.5) feet to the home and staff believe future root impacts based on the growth rate is acceptable and root pruning is an effective management strategy at this time.

The appeal provided a statement with concerns of the cost of the impacts from the tree. "The cost spent a couple of years ago to replace the fence and patio due to the damage from the tree was over \$7,340. Having to replace or fix the property's fence and patio every couple of years is an unreasonable economic burden." Staff acknowledge the high cost for the past repairs from impacts of the tree but is of the opinion

that future repairs will likely be less costly and if managed well could occur at a more reasonable frequency.

The Appeal provided a statement with concerns of modifying the fence. “In addition, the suggestion in the denial letter to modify the fence to accommodate tree growth is not possible, since the set rules in the Willow Park Mountain View Homeowners Association CC&Rs doesn’t allow for external alterations that will alter the external appearance of the complex.” Staff inspected the fence, and it appears the fence does not need modifications at this time. If the fence needs modifications in the future, it appears the fence could be modified without significantly altering the external appearance of the complex, but the applicant did not clarify the CCR’s definition of an external alteration.

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 it’s 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.

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 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

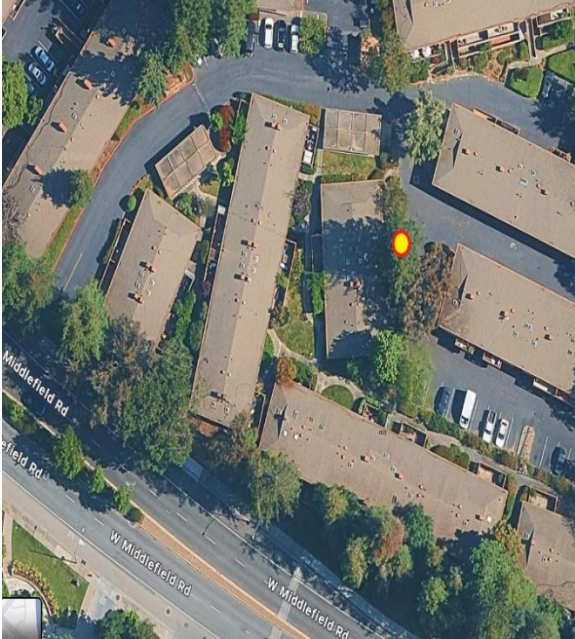


Photo #1
Aerial image showing tree of concern in HOA



Photo #2
Driveway view of tree of concern



Photo #3
Photo of fence and tree looking North



Photo #4
Photo of the tree facing South



Photo #5
Photo of patio of unit #149



Photo #6
Photo of uplifted of pavers (approx. 1 inch.)

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 and Arborist Report
 4. Heritage Tree Notice of Decision
 5. Heritage Tree Appeal and Notice