



STAFF REPORT

To: Beautification Commission

Date: August 6, 2026

From: Richard Holtz, Parks Superintendent/City Arborist

Subject: Public Hearing to Consider an Appeal of the City Arborist's Approval of the Removal of a Protected Private Tree at 1347 Montero Ave.

RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends that the Commission review the City Arborist's decision to approve the removal of a protected private Coastal Redwood tree at 1347 Montero Ave. The Commission can either:

1. Uphold the City Arborist's decision.
2. Reject the City Arborist's decision and deny the tree's removal.
3. Request more information to make a determination at a future meeting.

BACKGROUND

In February 2026, an application was approved to remove a mature Coastal Redwood tree at this site due to significantly declining health. The property was sold, and the new owners submitted an application to remove another protected private Coastal Redwood tree (Exhibit A). The application listed reasons for removal due to structural damage caused by the tree. The Applicant also submitted arborist reports prepared by Advanced Tree Care and Kielty Arborist Service (Exhibit B).

The arborist report lists the Coastal Redwood tree as having fair health and poor structure due to a major codominant leader that begins at the base of the tree. The seam of the attachment extends to the soil line, significantly increasing the likelihood of failure. Additionally, the tree grows at a distance of approximately 4 feet from the garage. Roots from the Redwood tree's root crown are actively damaging the structure by pressing on the wall of the garage and the concrete floor in this area.

The City Arborist visited the site and was able to verify the site conditions listed in the Arborist report. In accordance with municipal code, the removal was approved, and public notice was made. During the public notice period, two appeals were received objecting to the removal of the redwood tree.

DISCUSSION

Coastal Redwood Trees

Coastal Redwood trees are generally regarded as long-lived species with a low likelihood of significant failure. The species is a large, coniferous species that often contributes significantly to its surrounding environment. However, growing redwood trees in the urban environment can present challenges. Their high water needs often lead to root intrusion into utilities and structural spaces. The species can tolerate root pruning well, though mitigation efforts are often temporary and performed based on specific site conditions.

City Arborist's Reason to Approve Removal

While whole tree failures of Coastal Redwood trees are rare, this specimen does have a higher likelihood of failure due to the codominant structure that extends to the base of the tree. This risk could be reduced by pruning or removal of the smaller co-dominant stem or cabling of the co-dominant trunks.

The primary issue is the damage roots are causing to the garage. The tree has overgrown its planting space, is causing structural damage, and will continue to do so. The City Arborist does not believe root pruning is appropriate in this situation due to the close proximity of major roots to the trunk of the tree.

The approval of the removal of the tree is based on Burlingame's Municipal Code (BMC) Chapter 11.06.060 criteria, specifically:

BMC 11.06.060 (1) The condition of the tree(s) with respect to disease; danger of falling; proximity to existing or proposed structures, yards, driveways, and other trees;

BMC 11.06.060 (3) That the tree or its roots are causing, or threatening to cause, damage to any main structure on the property or on any adjacent property and there are no reasonable alternative means to mitigate the damage or threatened damage. Reasonable alternative means of mitigation include, but are not limited to, cutting tree roots, trimming the tree canopy, or installing a root barrier. Removing, relocating, or in any way altering any main structure on the property shall not be considered a reasonable alternative means of mitigation for the purposes of this Section. and interference with public utility services; and

BMC 11.06.060 (9) The economic consequences and obligations of requiring a tree to remain (Exhibit C).

Reason for the Appeal

The primary reason for the appeal of the City Arborist's decision to approve the removal of the Coastal Redwood is the belief that this specimen contributes significantly to the neighborhood and that the detached garage should not be considered a main structure on the property (Exhibit D).

EXHIBITS

- A. Tree Removal Application
 - B. Independent Arborist Reports
 - C. City Arborist Approval
 - D. Appeal of the Approval to Remove the Coastal Redwood Tree
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