

SITE INSPECTION

CONTACT: Applicant

TOWN OF ATHERTON #5678 (gate code)
PLANNING COMMISSION APPLICATION

email applicant date/time - she will alert property owner



RECEIVED

FEB 20 2015

TOWN OF ATHERTON
BUILDING DEPARTMENT

	TYPE OF APPLICATION	FEE
	Appeal	\$750.00
	Conditional Use Permit/ Special Structure Permit	\$2,684.24
	Environmental Impact Report	Actual cost
	Final Parcel Map	\$2,684.24
	General Plan Amendment	\$5,162.00
X	Heritage Tree Removal Permit	\$2,064.80
	Initial Review/Negative Declaration	\$2,064.80
	Lot Line Adjustment	\$1,548.60
	Lot Line Redesignation	\$2,684.24
	School Master Plan	\$774.30
	Tentative Parcel Map	\$2,684.24
	Variance	\$2,684.24
	Zoning Ordinance Amendment	\$5,162.00

SITE ADDRESS: 86 Alejandra Avenue APN 070-250-080

Provide a brief description of the proposed project: Removal of solo Coast Redwood at
at property frontage located underneath power lines. The redwood's
crown spread is competing with adjacent oaks and its removal will allow
space for more desirable Heritage Oaks to thrive.

PROPERTY OWNER:

Name: John Freund
Mailing Address: 86 Alejandra Avenue
Phone: 650-475-0141
Email: john@skylineventures.com

Signature: [Signature]

APPLICANT:

Name: Lisa Bui / Studio Green
Mailing Address: 232 Sir Francis Drake
Phone: 415-721-0905
Email: lisa@studiigreen.com

Signature: [Signature]

.....
FOR CITY COMPLETION:

Amount Paid: 2064.80 Received by: Kelli Date Submitted: 2/20/15
Project #: HT15-00001



DATE: FOR THE PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING OF MARCH 25, 2015

TO: THE PLANNING COMMISSION

FROM: STEPHANIE DAVIS, AICP, SENIOR PLANNER

SUBJECT: HERITAGE TREE REMOVAL PERMIT TO ALLOW THE REMOVAL OF ONE (1) TREE AT 86 ALEJANDRA (APN 070-250-080)

RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends that the Planning Commission conduct the public hearing, and deny the Heritage Tree Removal Permit for the removal of one heritage Coast Redwood tree at 86 Alejandra in Atherton based on the following finding and for the reasons outlined in this Report.

1. The removal of the tree would be contrary to the purpose and intent of the Atherton General Plan.

Basis for finding: The one tree requested for removal is not in declining condition, nor determined to be dangerous. It is the professional opinion of the Town Arborist that no substantive benefit to other surrounding heritage trees would occur as a result of tree removal.

INTRODUCTION/BACKGROUND:

The subject site is approximately 56,550 square feet in area (approximately 1.3 acres). The property is located along Alejandra Avenue. The Coast Redwood tree proposed for removal is located along the property's frontage at Alejandra Avenue, behind the existing front wall that spans the front property line. There are eight heritage oak trees also located along the property frontage; four oak trees located behind the existing front wall and four oak trees located in front of the front wall within the public right-of-way.

A Heritage Tree Removal Permit was submitted on February 2, 2015 to remove this same heritage Coast Redwood at the staff level. The basis of the tree removal request was that the Coast Redwood tree was competing with existing heritage oak trees and PG&E power lines and its removal would allow the said oaks to better survive and thrive. The Town Arborist inspected all heritage trees at that time and determined that the heritage Coast Redwood proposed for removal was neither dead nor dangerous. Given such, that permit for the heritage tree removal was denied. The request before the Commission tonight is to appeal the decision of denial by the Town Arborist in order to allow for removal of the heritage Coast Redwood tree.

ANALYSIS:

The applicant had an Arborist Report prepared by John H. McClenahan of McClenahan Consulting on October 16, 2014. This report states that the Coast Redwood is proposed for removal due to crown spread competing with the eight oak trees on-site. The report notes that the tree is in fair condition, that the crown exhibits a minor accumulation of deadwood, and that 20 feet of branches have been removed for high voltage line clearance.

Ms. Sally Bentz, Town Arborist has prepared a memo based on her review of the Heritage Tree Removal Permit request, the applicant's submitted arborist report, as well as a site inspection. Ms. Bentz notes that the tree proposed for removal has good form with some deadwood that can be pruned out. It is moderately healthy considering it is pruned/topped midway up the trunk on a regular basis by PG&E or similar utility company to clear the high voltage lines. This is not uncommon practice, as within the immediate neighborhood, most of the redwood trees on Alejandra Avenue have been topped by PG&E to clear the lines. Topping is the indiscriminate cutting of tree branches to stubs or to lateral branches to reduce the size of a tree and can increase risk in the long term. The proposed heritage Coast Redwood proposed for removal has not been topped nor had its top removed, allowing it be more healthy than the others on Alejandra Avenue. □

It is Ms. Bentz's professional opinion, given such, that the benefits of keeping the Coast Redwood are greater than the benefit the surrounding heritage oak trees would receive if it was approved for removal. It is noted that the oak tree to the east of the Coast Redwood will have the greatest benefit of more space and light, but the other heritage oaks would not substantively benefit, as these oaks will still need to be pruned below the voltage lines (as they too are also pruned as to not conflict with the high voltage lines). Therefore, the oaks will never reach their full growth potential even if the proposed heritage Coast Redwood tree is removed. It is further noted that the arborist report submitted does not conclude that the heritage Coast Redwood is dangerous or a hazard to any targets on the property or street side and that the way the trees is pruned would cause any risk.

There is no associated proposed replanting of any trees as part of this application. Should the Planning Commission decide to approve the Heritage Tree Removal Permit, staff recommends replacement planting of one 36 inch box size tree on the property as a condition of approval.

ALTERNATIVE:

The Commission could approve removal of the one Coast Redwood tree as requested by the applicant.

FISCAL IMPACT:

The applicants pay for all costs covering the processing of this application.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT:

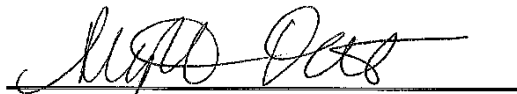
This project has been determined to be exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) as the City Council has determined that the removal of two or fewer heritage trees is exempt from further environmental review.

RECOMMENDED FORMAL MOTION:

I move that the Planning Commission uphold the decision of the Town Arborist and find that the proposed removal of one heritage tree at 86 Alejandra Avenue in Atherton would be contrary to the purpose and intent of the General Plan, for the reasons outlined in the Staff Report, and that the Commission deny the Heritage Tree Removal Certificate.

ALTERNATIVE FORMAL MOTION:

I move that the Planning Commission find that the proposed removal of one heritage tree at 86 Alejandra Avenue in Atherton would not be contrary to the purpose and intent of the General Plan, for the reasons outlined in the Staff Report, and that the Commission approve the tree removal with the conditions stated in the Draft Heritage Tree Removal Certificate.



Stephanie Davis, AICP, Senior Planner

Attachments:

1. Draft Tree Removal Certificate
2. Town Arborist Memo, prepared by Sally Bentz, dated March 15, 2015
3. Arborist Report, prepared by John H. McClenahan, dated October 16, 2015
4. Proposed Site Plan and Letter of Request



Town of Atherton

Planning Department
91 Ashfield Road
Atherton, California 94027
Phone: (650) 752-0544
Fax: (650) 614-1224

**TOWN OF ATHERTON
PLANNING COMMISSION
Draft HERITAGE TREE REMOVAL PERMIT**

THIS IS TO CERTIFY THAT the Atherton Planning Commission at a regular meeting thereof, held on Wednesday, March 25, 2015 did grant a Heritage Tree Removal Permit to John Freund pursuant to Atherton Municipal Code Section 8.10 to allow the removal of one Coast redwood tree at 86 Alejandra Avenue in Atherton (Assessor's Parcel Number 070-250-080). The Permit was approved subject to the following conditions:

1. Heritage tree removal shall be limited to one Redwood Tree (*Sequoia sempervirens*), identified as tree #2 in the Arborist report prepared by John H. McClenahan/McClenahan Consulting, LLC dated October 16, 2015 and as reviewed by the Planning Commission at its March 25, 2015 meeting. Any substantive changes to the plans shall be reviewed by the Planning Commission.
2. The applicant shall install tree replacement planting of two trees of twenty-four-inch box container size or one tree of thirty-six-inch container size trees to the written satisfaction of the Town Arborist in accordance with Section 8.10.040 (F) of the Town Municipal Code.
3. This Permit is valid from one year from the effective date.

Lisa Costa Sanders
Town Planner

Effective Date: _____
Atherton, CA

Memo



To: The Atherton Planning Commission
From: Sally D Bentz, Town Arborist
CC: Stephanie B Davis, Senior Planner
Date: 3/12/15
Re: Appeal to Heritage Tree Removal Application, 86 Alejandra Ave

I have reviewed the tree for removal at 86 Alejandra Ave and offer the following observations for your review:

- The owner John Freund applied for a Heritage Tree Removal permit on February 2nd 2015. The application was to remove tree #2, a Redwood heritage tree. A site plan and arborist report was submitted.
- The report by arborist John H. McClenahan (WE-1476B) with McClenahan Consulting Inc. was completed on October 16th, 2014 for Mr. John G. Freund.

The report stated that:

Tree #2 is a Coast Redwood, *Sequoia sempervirens* with a 36.1" diameter and a 34' spread. He stated the condition was fair, the crown exhibits a minor accumulation of deadwood and 20' of branches have been removed for high voltage line clearance. Also, surface rooting was observed. The tree is proposed for removal due to crown spread competing with adjacent oaks.

- I visited the site, reviewed the tree for removal and the arborist report. At the staff level I did not find the tree to be dead or dangerous. Based on my evaluation and the arborist report, I denied the permit and the applicant was notified and appealed the decision.

My assessment:

Tree #2 has good form and has some deadwood that can be pruned out. The tree is moderately healthy considering it is pruned on a regularly basis by PG&E or similar utility company to clear the high voltage lines. The tree is pruned midway up the trunk to clear the high voltage lines.

Most of the redwood trees on Alejandra to the East of this location have been topped by PG&E to clear the lines. Topping is the indiscriminate cutting of tree branches to stubs or to lateral branches that are not large enough to assume the terminal role. Topping is often used to reduce the size of a tree. Topping will increase risk in the long term. At 86 Alejandra the top of the tree has not been removed and has not been topped. Since, the redwood at 86 Alejandra has not been topped the tree is more healthy then the others on Alejandra Ave.

To address the concern for the existing Oak trees, I feel that the benefits of keeping the redwood are greater than the benefit the Oaks will receive if it is approved for removal. The Oak tree to the east will have the greatest benefit of more space and light, but the other Oaks

will not be affected too much by the redwood tree's removal. The Oaks will still need to be pruned below the lines. The Oak trees that are referenced in the arborist report are also pruned as to not conflict with the high voltage lines. Therefore the Oaks will never reach their potential even if the Redwood tree is removed.

There was no mention in the arborist report that the tree is dangerous or a hazard to any targets on the property or street side and that the way the trees is pruned would cause a risk.

- At staff level it is my job to assess if a tree is dead or dangerous. In my professional arboriculture opinion I feel this tree is not dead or dangerous and therefore I denied the removal.

The information included in this memo is believed to be true and based on sound arboricultural principles and practices.

Sincerely,

Sally Bentz

Town Arborist, Certified Arborist WE#9238A

ARBORIST REPORT

Submitted To:

**Mr. John G. Freund
86 Alejandra Avenue
Atherton, CA 94027**

Project Location:

**86 Alejandra Avenue
Atherton, CA**

Submitted By:

**McCLENAHAN CONSULTING, LLC
John H. McClenahan
ISA Board Certified Master Arborist, WE-1476B
member, American Society of Consulting Arborists
October 16, 2014
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McClenahan Consulting, LLC

Arboriculturists Since 1911

1 Arastradero Road, Portola Valley, CA 94028-8012

Telephone (650) 326-8781

Fax (650) 854-1267

www.spmcclenahan.com

October 16, 2014

Mr. John G. Freund

86 Alejandra Avenue

Atherton, CA 94027

Assignment

As requested, I performed a visual inspection of 9 trees located in the front of the house to determine species, size and condition.

Summary

One tree, a coast redwood, is proposed for removal. The other eight trees in this report are heritage size oaks. The oaks inside the property are irrigated. Therefore, I recommend performing a root collar inspection to determine the presence or extent of any root rot organisms. Tree two exhibits bleeding cankers and needs further evaluation. The redwood is proposed for removal due to conflict with oaks at the frontage. Tree two is shown below on the left and tree one below on the right.



Mr. John G. Freund

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Methodology

No root crown exploration, climbing or plant tissue analysis was performed as part of this survey.

In determining Tree Condition several factors have been considered which include:

Rate of growth over several seasons;
Structural decays or weaknesses;
Presence of disease or insects; and
Life expectancy.

Tree Description/Observation

1: Coast live oak (*Quercus agrifolia*)

Diameter: 29.4"

Height: 35' **Spread:** 48'

Condition: Fair

Location: Frontage

Observation: Crown has been pruned for line clearance and exhibits normal vigor. Grows to a slight lean. Root environment is limited. Ivy surrounds root flare and beginning to climb on main trunk. The *Tree Protection Zone (TPZ)* is 15-feet.

2: Coast redwood (*Sequoia sempervirens*)

Diameter: 36.1"

Height: 100' **Spread:** 34'

Condition: Fair

Location: Frontage

Observation: Crown exhibits a minor accumulation of deadwood and 20-feet of branches have been removed for high voltage line clearance. Surface rooting was observed. This tree is proposed for removal due to crown spread competing with adjacent oaks.

3: Valley oak (*Quercus lobata*)

Diameter: 22.2"

Height: 25' **Spread:** 35'

Condition: Fair

Location: Street

Observation: Crown topped for line clearance. Grows to a slight lean. Limited root environment observed. Ivy surrounds root flare. Adjacent redwood is outcompeting the crown for light. The *TPZ* is 12-feet.

4: Coast live oak

Diameter: 24.7"

Height: 38' **Spread:** 34'

Condition: Fair

Location: Frontage

Observation: Partial line clearance pruning is evident in the crown. Foliage is slightly sparse with a moderate accumulation of deadwood. Bifurcation at 7-feet has a U-shaped branch formation. Located in an irrigated landscape. The *TPZ* is 13-feet.

Mr. John G. Freund

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5: Coast live oak

Diameter: 23.1"

Height: 30' **Spread:** 36'

Condition: Fair

Location: Street

Observation: Crown partially topped line clearance. Grows to an exaggerated lean over street. Ivy grows on low trunk. The *TPZ is 12-feet*.

6: Valley oak

Diameter: 38"

Height: 45' **Spread:** 55'

Condition: Fair to Good

Location: Front left

Observation: Crown exhibits a minor accumulation of deadwood. Tree is located in an irrigated landscape. Minor pruning to crown for line clearance.

7: Coast live oak

Diameter: 35.3"

Height: 45' **Spread:** 55'

Condition: Poor to Fair

Location: Front left of house

Observation: Crown is slightly sparse with dieback. Bleeding cankers observed on low trunk. Recommend root collar inspection to determine the extent of cankers and sapwood decay. The *TPZ is 15-feet*.

8: Coast live oak

Diameter: 15.7"

Height: 25' **Spread:** 20'

Condition: Fair

Location: Entry gate pillar

Observation: Topped for line clearance.

9: Coast live oak

Diameter: 17.8"

Height: 30' **Spread:** 36'

Condition: Fair

Location: Street

Observation: Partially topped for line clearance. Grows to an exaggerated lean over the street. Western sycamore borer infestation observed on compression side of trunk. The *TPZ is 9-feet*.

All written material appearing herein constitutes original and unpublished work of the Arborist and may not be duplicated, used or disclosed without written consent of the Arborist.

Mr. John G. Freund
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We thank you for this opportunity to be of assistance in your tree preservation concerns.

Should you have any questions, or if we may be of further assistance in these concerns, kindly contact our office at any time.

Very truly yours,

McCLENAHAN CONSULTING, LLC

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John H. McClenahan". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of each word being capitalized and prominent.

By: **John H. McClenahan**
ISA Board Certified Master Arborist, WE-1476B
member, American Society of Consulting Arborists

JHMc: pm



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ARBORIST DISCLOSURE STATEMENT

Arborists are tree specialists who use their education, knowledge, training and experience to examine trees, recommend measures to enhance the beauty and health of trees, and attempt to reduce the risk of living near trees. Clients may choose to accept or disregard the recommendations of the arborist, or seek additional advice.

Arborists cannot detect every condition that could possibly lead to the structural failure of a tree. Trees are living organisms that fail in ways we do not fully understand. Conditions are often hidden within trees and below ground. Arborists cannot guarantee that a tree will be healthy or safe under all circumstances, or for a specified period of time. Likewise, remedial treatments, like a medicine, cannot be guaranteed.

Treatment, pruning, and removal of trees may involve considerations beyond the scope of the arborist's services such as property boundaries, property ownership, site lines, disputes between neighbors, landlord-tenant matters, etc. Arborists cannot take such issues into account unless complete and accurate information is given to the arborist. The person hiring the arborist accepts full responsibility for authorizing the recommended treatment or remedial measures.

Trees can be managed, but they cannot be controlled. To live near a tree is to accept some degree of risk. The only way to eliminate all risks is to eliminate all trees.

Arborist:

John H. McClenahan

Date:

October 16, 2014