



HERITAGE TREE PRUNING & REMOVAL

Informational Handout

This handout is intended to assist the public in understanding of the importance of trees in our community and the process for removal.

This handout is intended to assist the public in understanding of the importance of trees in our community and the process for removal. Healthy trees reduce air and noise pollution, provide energy-saving shade and cooling, furnish habitat for wildlife, enhance aesthetics and property values, and are an important contributor to community image, pride, and quality of life.

Contact the City right away for questions or concerns about a tree that may be a safety hazard. Don't wait!

What are the criteria for a tree removal?

Chapter 7.4 of the Municipal Code says consideration shall be given to the following:

- A)** The condition of the tree with respect to disease, general health, damage, public nuisance, danger of falling, proximity to existing or proposed structures and interface with utility services, age or remaining lifespan, and whether or not the tree acts as host for a plant which is parasitic to other species of trees which are in danger of being infested or exterminated by the parasite;
- B)** The necessity of the requested action to construct improvements, or other enjoyment of the property;
- C)** The topography of the land and the effect of the requested action on erosion, soil retention, water retention and diversion or increased flow of surface water;
- D)** The number, species, size and location of existing trees in the area and the effect the requested action would have in terms of providing shade, protection from wind, privacy, historic value and scenic beauty;

- E)** The number of healthy trees a given parcel of land will support according to good arboricultural practices;
- F)** The availability of reasonable and feasible alternatives that would allow for preservation of the tree or trees.

What documents do I submit?

- 1) Tree Permit Application;
- 2) One plot plan showing the location of the tree to be removed and species of the tree to be replaced (an aerial photo is acceptable); include existing buildings on property, adjacent street(s) with names.
- 3) Photo(s) of the tree(s) printed on 8 ½ in. x11 in. paper;
- 4) Permit Fee
- 5) Arborist Report (when required)

The application should include any relevant information about the tree(s) and the reason for removal or significant pruning (i.e., removal of more than 1/3 of branches or roots)

What does the City do with my request to remove a “Heritage Tree”?

Upon receipt of your application, staff will review the information submitted in light of the approval criteria and inspect the tree or consult with an arborist as necessary. You will be notified immediately when a decision has been made and an explanation will be provided in writing.

How long does the process take?

The permit is generally processed in 2 to 3 working days but can take longer if inspection by the City’s consulting arborist is needed.

Is a replacement tree required?

Yes, replacement trees are required on a one for one basis with a minimum 24 inches box sized tree. Species and location to allow maturity of the new tree. Dwarf trees and shrubs/shrub like trees do not qualify as replacement trees. Replanting must occur within 30 days of removal of the heritage tree.

Can staff’s determination be appealed?

Any decision of City Staff to issue or deny a permit may be appealed to the Planning Commission, and a decision of the Planning Commission may be appealed to the City Council.

What is a Heritage Tree?

- 1) A tree located on public or private property, exclusive of eucalyptus, with a trunk diameter of twelve inches or more, or a circumference of at least thirty-eight inches measured at forty-eight inches above ground level.
- 2) A tree or stand of trees so designated by resolution of the City Council based on its finding of special historical, environmental or aesthetic value.
- 3) Any street tree located in the public right-of-way along the entire length of Main Street

and Kelly Avenue between San Benito Street and Highway 1.

Can I prune my “Heritage Tree”?

Normal maintenance/pruning of a “Heritage Tree” does not require a permit; however, it is unlawful for any person to prune more than one-third of the branches or roots of a heritage tree within a twelve (12) month period, without obtaining a permit. In case of emergency, when a tree is imminently hazardous or dangerous to life or property, it may be removed by order of the Community Development Director, or of the chief of the Half Moon Bay Fire Protection District.

Still have Questions?



The City of Half Moon Bay is committed to the preservation of “Heritage Trees” throughout the community and to educate residents about the benefits of trees. If you have any questions about the information in this brochure, please contact us.

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