

Trimming and Removing Heritage Trees

Why are some trees designated as heritage trees?



By designating certain trees as “heritage trees,” the Board of Supervisors helps to preserve natural vegetation and retain the County’s beauty.

Which trees are heritage trees?

All Santa Cruz Cypress and Oregon White Oak are heritage trees. Depending upon their size and location, all of the following native trees may be heritage trees: Bigleaf Maple, Madrone, Golden Chinquapin, Oregon Ash, Tan Oak, Douglas Fir, Coast Live Oak, Canyon Live Oak, Black Oak, Interior Live Oak, Valley Oak, Blue Oak, California Bay or Laurel, California Nutmeg, and Redwood. (A detailed list of these trees, including their scientific names and qualifying sizes, is available at the Planning counter.)

The Board of Supervisors may designate other trees and groves as heritage trees.

Does the designation apply to trees on both public and private property?

Yes. It does not apply, however, to any area for which you have a valid timber harvesting permit.

I have a heritage tree on my property. How does the designation affect me?



You need a permit to trim, destroy, or remove the tree. If you request any permit for the property (building, use, variance, etc.) you will need to identify the heritage trees in your plans and may be required to take steps to ensure that your project does not endanger them.

How do I apply for an application to trim, remove, or destroy a heritage tree?



Submit an application to Planning. On the application, identify the species, number and location of the trees, and the reason for your request.

Who will approve the permit?



The Planning staff. They may either inspect the tree or base their decision on maps, photographs, and other provided information, which may include a report from a licensed arborist.

What will determine whether my application is approved?

A number of criteria, including:

- ✓ The tree’s general health, expected longevity, historic value, and proximity to structure or utilities
- ✓ The number, species, size, and location of other trees in the area
- ✓ The impact of the removal on your ability to gain full use of your property
- ✓ The increase in potential erosion or water flow.

How long will it take to process an application?



Normally, it takes no more than 20 working days.

Can I appeal the decision?

You or any other interested party can appeal Planning’s decision to the Planning Commission and the Commission’s decision to the Board of Supervisors.

What should I do in an “emergency”, for example, if a tree has been partially uprooted and is a danger to my home?



If possible, request verbal permission from Planning before taking any action. If the situation is urgent, take steps to document the emergency (e.g., photographs) and notify Planning within a reasonable time after you have taken action.

What fees must I pay to receive a permit?



You must pay a flat fee for a removal permit and for a trimming permit.

What's the next step in the process?



Read the pamphlet *General Procedures When You Apply for a Planning or Building Permit*. This pamphlet explains the general procedures for applying for a permit, paying fees, calling for inspections, and other related matters. Then you should also review the following documents, which contain other information that you may need:

Trimming and Removing Significant Trees

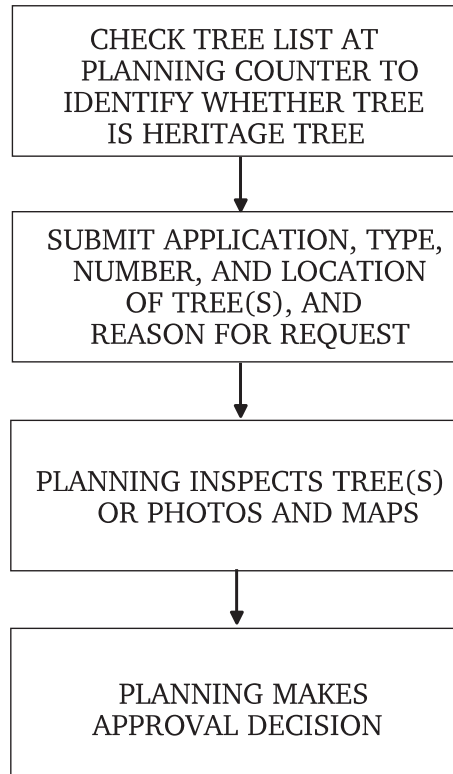
Section 11000, San Mateo County Ordinance: Regulation of the Removal of Heritage Trees

How to Appeal a Decision

After you have become familiar with these documents, we recommend that you prepare some very preliminary plans and bring them to the DRC counter so that we can review them. An informal meeting at this stage may save you considerable time and money later on.

If you are new to San Mateo County, you may also wish to make an appointment to meet with staff as part of the County's Early Assistance Meeting Program. Early assistance meetings are designed to acquaint owner/builders, contractors, architects, and other professionals who are new to the area or unfamiliar with our permit system, the different agencies involved, and the various costs and requirements. There is no charge for the meeting, which you can schedule by calling (650) 363-1825.

Permit Process to Trim and Remove Heritage Trees



San Mateo County
Planning and Building Division

Trimming and Removing Heritage Trees

Planning and Building Division

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