



# CITY OF POMONA

## HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION

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**DATE:** MAY 3, 2017

**TO:** HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION

**FROM:** PLANNING DIVISION

**SUBJECT:** MAJOR CERTIFICATE OF APPROPRIATENESS (MAJCOA 6988-2017) TO ALLOW THE REMOVAL OF A CEDAR DEODAR TREE IN THE FRONT YARD OF THE RESIDENCE LOCATED AT 366 WEST ALVARADO STREET WITHIN THE WILTON HEIGHTS HISTORIC DISTRICT.

### SUMMARY

**Issue** – Should the Historic Preservation Commission approve Major Certificate of Appropriateness (MAJCOA 6988-2017) to allow removal of a cedar deodar tree in the front yard of the residence located at 366 W. Alvarado Street?

**Recommendation** – Staff recommends that the Historic Preservation Commission adopt the attached resolution denying Major Certificate Appropriateness (MAJCOA 6988-2017).

**Applicable Codes** – Zoning Ordinance Section .5809-13—Historic Preservation and Resolution No. 2000-72—Pomona Historic Sites Tree Protection Program.

**City Initiated Corrective Action** – Code Compliance staff responded to a Police Department dispatch call by a resident requesting a notice to stop work during the beginning stages of the removal of the subject tree on a weekend morning of July 16, 2016.

**Environmental Determination** – Categorical Exemption, Section 15304 – Minor Alterations to Land.

### BACKGROUND

The existing single family home located at 366 W. Alvarado Street is a minimal traditional home built in 1947. The building sits on a 8,470 square-foot lot in the R-1-7200 (Single-family Residential) zone within the Wilton Heights Historic District. A 1995 Wilton Heights Historic District Survey identifies the residence as a Minimal Traditional structure that is in very good condition with no alterations.

The applicant is requesting a Major Certificate of Appropriateness to remove one cedar deodar evergreen tree that is located in the front yard of the subject property. The existing tree is 26.5 inches in diameter and the tree stands approximately 60 feet in height (see Exhibit F-Photos). The property owner hired a tree removal contractor who removed a large limb at the lowest point of the branch growth area before City staff requested the homeowner to cease work on the tree removal. The City of Pomona Police Department and the City's Code Compliance Division received phone calls on the morning of Saturday July 16, 2016 requesting that the City stop the actions of the property owner who had hired a tree removal contractor.

The property owner had been issued a Tree Removal Exemption Permit to begin work, however staff later determined that the permit was issued in error and rescinded the approval. The City has now requested that the property owner obtain a Major Certificate of Appropriateness through the public hearing process before the Historic Preservation Commission.

The property owner was unaware that a permit had been issued in error and is dissatisfied with the actions of the City to date. The property owner still desires to remove the tree based on concerns that the sewer lateral is being damaged and could require a costly sewer line replacement in the future. Although the symmetry of the existing tree has been compromised by the trimming activities that occurred last summer, the tree appears to currently be in a healthy condition and does not appear to pose a danger to the existing home or adjacent properties.

## **ANALYSIS**

### **Applicable Code**

According to Zoning Ordinance Section .5809-13—Historic Preservation, trees within historic districts are defined as *historic resources* and their cutting or removal are considered as *alterations*. Pursuant to Section .5809—13, the Pomona Historic Sites Tree Protection Program (Resolution No. 2000-72) requires approval of a COA for the alteration of *character-defining landscaping* including *mature significant trees*, defined as trees with trunks more than ten inches in diameter. Under Resolution No. 2000-72, the removal of *mature significant trees*, such as the subject tree, requires a Major COA.

### **Exemption**

The applicant states that the subject tree is proposed for removal due to damage the tree roots are causing to the sewer lateral line located within the front yard of the property. The City arborist has assessed the health of the tree as it stands today and is believes that the tree is healthy and will survive without detrimental effects to the property or adjacent properties.

The property owner has not provided to the City any technical evidence of damage to the sewer lateral line. However the staff is of the opinion that an emergency or exemption type of application is not appropriate for sewer lateral lines due to the fact that there are various

techniques to repair, replace or simply conduct regular maintenance of sewer laterals on private property. Many times, providing routine annual maintenance of sewer lines through root removal solves issues of sewer laterals that may be impacted by tree or shrub root systems constricting or blocking waste lines.

### **Tree Context & Condition**

The Cedar Deodar tree species are generally recommended for large yard areas and can grow taller in larger yard areas and provide excellent screening for properties. The existing front yard of the property is not considered a “large” area and therefore may not necessarily be the most appropriate setting for the life of a tree of this grand size and scale. One perspective is that the tree is out of scale to the overall setting of the property size and the home size and is competing for air space with the City street trees. In addition, trimming throughout the life of the tree has altered the symmetry of the branch configuration of this type of tree, where most of the growth is at the upper end of the tree that is visible from a distance rather than close proximity (see Attachment G).

Planning staff is following previous direction of the Commission since the inception of the historic district to not support the removal of significant mature trees. However, if the Commission agrees that the tree has been significantly altered and is out of context with the property and the neighborhood, a resolution for approval has also been attached as an option for the Commission to consider, which would require a replacement shade tree to be installed within the front yard of the property.

### **RECOMMENDATION**

Staff recommends that the Historic Preservation Commission adopt the attached resolution denying Major Certificate of Appropriateness (MAJCOA 6988-2017).

Respectfully submitted,



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Brad Johnson  
Development Services Manager

**ATTACHMENTS:**

- A – Draft HPC Denial Resolution
- B – Draft HPC Approval Resolution
- C – Exemption Form Rescinded
- D – Letter Rescinding Exemption, dated July 25, 2016
- E – Vicinity Map
- F – Photos
- G – Cedar Deodar Tree Description