TO:  HONORABLE CITY COUNCIL
FROM:  CITY MANAGER  DEPARTMENT: PLANNING AND COMMUNITY ENVIRONMENT
DATE:  OCTOBER 23, 2000  CMR:384:00

SUBJECT: REQUEST FOR CITY COUNCIL TO APPROVE THE DESIGNATION OF A SILVER MAPLE LOCATED AT 1872 EDGEWOOD DRIVE AS HERITAGE TREE NO. 5 AND AN AMERICAN ELM AT 4226 PONCE DRIVE AS HERITAGE TREE NO. 6. (see page 2)

RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends that Council approve the designation of two trees for heritage status: a Silver Maple located at 1872 Edgewood Drive as Heritage Tree No. 5 (see Attachment A); and an American Elm located in the center of the San Alma Homeowners Association housing complex, at 4226 Ponce Drive, as Heritage Tree No. 6 (see Attachment B).

BACKGROUND

Chapter 8.10.090 of the Palo Alto Municipal Code, entitled “Designation of Heritage Trees,” provides for persons to nominate a tree on their property as a heritage tree. After City Council approval of such designation, the tree will be included in a listing maintained by the Planning and Community Environment Department. This listing includes information such as specific location, overall size and canopy spread. Once designated, a heritage tree will be subject to the provisions of the Tree Preservation and Management Regulations, unless removed from the list by subsequent action of the City Council. These regulations include guidelines and restrictions regarding pruning, removal and development that impact the tree.

DISCUSSION

Heritage Tree No. 5.

Mr. Donald Starner and Ms. Mary Starner, owners of the property at 1872 Edgewood Drive, filed an application for heritage tree status for the Silver Maple located in the back yard of their property. The tree is an outstanding example of its kind and perhaps the oldest and biggest Silver Maple in the City. It provides aesthetic quality and shade to the surrounding area.
The Silver Maple meets the standards for heritage tree designation set forth in Chapter 8.10.090 and the Heritage Tree Checklist, which was developed by staff (see Attachment C). Written request, consent and photographs have been received from the Starners. In addition, a written analysis of the tree’s specific location, size, dimensions and qualities was conducted by arborist Kenneth D. Meyer, of Mayne Tree Expert Company, Inc. (The letter of request/consent and arborist report are included as Attachment A). According to the arborist report, the appraised valuation of the tree contributes $16,900 to the value of this property.

Staff recommends that this tree be designated as Heritage Tree No. 5, based upon the finding that it is unique and of importance to the property owner and community because it meets criteria 1, 3 and 4 of the following criteria set forth in the Tree Preservation Ordinance:

(1) It satisfies PAMC Section 8.10.090 requirements;
(2) It is an outstanding specimen of a desirable species;
(3) It is one of the largest and oldest trees in Palo Alto; and
(4) It possesses distinctive form, size, age, location and/or historical significance.

Heritage Tree No. 6.
The San Alma Homeowners Association, owner of the complex of homes at 4226 Ponce Drive, filed an application for heritage tree status for the American Elm located at the center of this complex. The tree has historical significance in that it is a significant tree located on the site where Don Secundo Robles, once the owner of all of the land that is now Palo Alto, built his adobe home in 1840. The tree is an outstanding example of its kind. It is 60 feet tall and is a landmark for the housing complex and the surrounding community.

The American Elm meets the standards for heritage tree designation set forth in Chapter 8.10.090 and the Heritage Tree Checklist. Written request, consent and photographs have been received from the San Alma Homeowners Association, along with a written analysis of the tree’s specific location, size, dimensions and qualities by arborist John R. McClenan, of S. P. McClenan Co., Inc. (The request/consent letter and arborist report are included as Attachment B). According to the arborist report, the appraised valuation of the tree contributes $10,900 to the value of this property.

Staff recommends that this tree be designated as Heritage Tree No. 6, based upon the finding that it is unique and of importance to the property owner and community because it meets criteria 1, 3 and 4 set forth in the Tree Protection Ordinance:

(1) It satisfies PAMC Section 8.10.090 requirements;
(2) It is an outstanding specimen of a desirable species;
(3) It is one of the largest or oldest trees in Palo Alto and;
(4) It possesses distinctive form, size, age, location and/or historical significance

RESOURCE IMPACT
There is no resource impact expected as a result of these designations.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS
The recommended action would continue to promote the process of heritage tree designation and is consistent with existing City policies and urban forest goals and objectives.

TIMELINE
After designation as a heritage tree by Council, the heritage tree will be recognized as such immediately.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW
The designation of heritage trees is exempt from provisions of the California Environmental Quality Act, Section 15061 (b)(3) because it can be seen with certainty that there is no possibility that the designation will have a significant effect on the environment.

ATTACHMENTS
Attachment A: Donald and Mary Starnes’s Request, Photographs, and Arborist Report
Attachment B: The San Alma Homeowners Association’s Request, Photographs, and Arborist Report
Attachment C: Tree Preservation and Management Regulations, Ordinance #4568 and Heritage Tree Checklist

PREPARED BY: Dave Dockter, Managing Arborist, Planning Division

DEPARTMENT HEAD REVIEW: G. EDWARD GAWF
Director of Planning and Community Environment

CITY MANAGER APPROVAL: AUDREY SEYMOUR
Assistant to the City Manager
San Alma Homeowners Association
4256 Ponce Drive
Palo Alto, CA 94306

24 August 2000

City Council
City of Palo Alto
P.O. Box 10250
Palo Alto, CA 94303

We are writing to request that the American elm (Ulmus americana) located in the center of our complex of homes be granted heritage tree status and protection as outlined in CPA Municipal Code 8.10.090.

San Alma Homeowners Association is located at the corner of Alma Street and San Antonio Road on the site where Don Secundo Robles built his adobe home sometime before 1840. Robles was the owner of all the land that is now Palo Alto. When San Alma was first established in 1974, the builders made certain that this large tree (then over 40 feet tall) would not only be protected, but would be the centerpiece of our group of 26 townhouses and eight condominium units.

The tree is now 60 feet tall and has been regularly cared for by professional arborists. Since the tree is in the common area of the Association property, we can assure you that the tree will continue to receive the very best care.

A map of our association layout of homes showing the location of the tree and photographs of the tree are enclosed. As you can see the tree is easily visible from the street and from a number of different angles. We would certainly agree to have the tree location listed on any maps so that others may enjoy it.

Thank you for considering this request.

Sincerely,

Sharon Berman
Vice President
San Alma Homeowners Association
Sometime before 1840, Don Secundo Robles built this adobe home on the corner of what is now Alma and San Antonio Road. This is the area now occupied by our homes at Villas de San Alma.

We thought all of our residents would enjoy reading about this area and how it was developed. The following pages are excerpted from the History of Palo Alto: The Early Years by Pamela Gullard and Nancy Lund which was published in 1989 and is available in the Palo Alto Library.

The Board of Directors
San Alma Homeowners Association
When it became fashionable to own land instead of merely live on it, the area that was to become Palo Alto was divided among only three families: The Robles, the Buelnas and the Sotos. These families presided over three large ranchos named for the stream that forms the border between San Mateo and Santa Clara Counties, San Franciscoquito Creek. Thus the rancho names were confusingly similar: Rancho San Franciscoquito, Rancho Rincon de San Franciscoquito and Rancho Rinconada del Arroyo de San Franciscoquito.

In addition to these three, a small portion of Juana Briones' holdings, La Purisima Concepcion, was located along the Palo Alto-Los Altos Hills border. Another, El Corte de Madera, spilled slightly over the boundaries of San Mateo County into today's Palo Alto hills.

These were the vast ranchos of the Mexican era, the days of the dons. Although it is typical to say Spanish land grants, Mexico actually owned California after 1821, all of Palo Alto's grants came after that date.

It is almost impossible to imagine today how large they were. San Franciscoquito encompassed the main part of today's Stanford campus, Rinconada del Arroyo de San Franciscoquito extended from the Menlo Park border of Palo Alto to the Midtown region, and Rincon de San Franciscoquito, the largest, occupied all of today's south Palo Alto, from the bay to the foothills. Vast indeed!

Initially these ranchos were gifts from the government of Mexico to people who had performed special favors, who had friends in high places and/or who were willing to settle the Alta California wilderness to help hold the land for Mexico against possibly aggressive foreign governments.

The owners of the land that became Palo Alto obtained their property in the 1840s, the decade after the closing of the missions and before the gold rush. They rode their beautiful horses, herded their cattle, traded hides to Yankee ships in exchange for manufactured goods, and little knew that the era of their beautiful ranchos was to be short-lived, thanks to the little yellow nuggets that brought foreigners into California by the tens of thousands.

Only glimmers of the stories of the ranchos remain, and much of the record that does exist is unclear. Many of the early rancheros couldn't read or write, and they considered careful record-keeping of land ownership unimportant. After all, in those days acquiring land was almost as easy as stopping your horse out on a California plain and declaring to the sky that all you surveyed was yours. The land was covered with oaks, the nearby hills were still inhabited by grizzly bears, and California was a lonely outpost of Mexico.

The Robles Family

Secundino Robles, owner of the ranch that occupied all of today's south Palo Alto, must have been a nearly perfect specimen of what history and legend report the dons of old California to have been: He was tall, well over 6'3"., and a handsome, blue-eyed native Californian, born in Santa Cruz in 1811. In an era when excellent horsemanship was the main delight in life, he was said to be the finest rider in the Santa Clara Valley. Early settlers reported seeing him pick up a row of silver dollars placed six feet apart on the ground while riding at a full gallop.

One can conjure up an image of him, arising at dawn, dressing in a satin jacket and velvet breeches, pulling on knee high buckskin boots, arming his fine horse with silver studded tack and galloping for miles toward the foothills on his own land.

The story of Don Secundino and Rancho Rincon de San Franciscoquito can begin with cinnabar, quicksilver, the same substance that the Indians prized for decoration and that the miners would later use in gold processing. As young men, boys really, in the 1820s, Secundino Robles and his brother
the Californio women to come to the mission to collect their dead.

One of those notified was María Antonia Robles, Secundino’s wife. Barely over five feet tall, about 26 years old, she harnessed the oxen and yoked them to the rough cart called a carreta for the drive to the missions, fervently hoping her husband was still alive. But she did not finish. She had proved her courage earlier by not losing faith when several of her children died, and once, in refusing to give up blankets to an American intruder. Reports say this tiny woman struck the intruder and pushed him out of her house. Fortunately her bravery wasn’t to be tested again this day. Secundino was alive and well.

On January 3, the two sides sat down to talk, which was the rancheros’ original goal. The treaty was simple: the hostages would be released, the Californios would surrender their arms and return home, the Californios would not be molested by the American military, and homes and other supplies wouldn’t be taken from the ranchos without receipts.

Treaty ceremonies took place on January 7, 1847. Upon the promise that there would be no more raids, the rancheros laid down their arms. One of Palo Alto’s enduring legends is that Secundino Robles broke his sword in half before he surrendered it. However, in her book on the Battle of Santa Clara, local historian Dorothy Regnery, a meticulous researcher, says that no Californio made any dramatic gesture at the ceremonies. Perhaps it says something of the character of the man that this legend exists.

Nine months later, in September 1847, Secundino Robles and his brother Teodoro bought Risco Rincon de San Francisco from José Pena. The purchase price for a large part of present-day Palo Alto was around $500 and was financed through that cave of cinnabar.

A few years earlier, the Robles brothers had taken Andrés Castillo, a Mexican mining expert, to their cave. He immediately recognized the cinnabar and its value, filed a claim with the Mexican government and organized a company to work the mine. Secundino and Teodoro received a one-sixth interest in that company. The Robles brothers used this share to purchase the ranch.

Local historians disagree as to whether the Robles brothers sold the one-sixth interest and then bought the ranch or whether they traded the mine shares for it. Since Jose Pena doesn’t seem to appear in the considerable litigation over New Almaden Mine ownership, the former seems most likely.

This is not the only real estate transaction in the
The Robles Adobe, where many of the Robles children were born. At left is a separate kitchen. The upper gallery was once a dance floor open to the sky. The Adobe walls collapsed in the 1906 earthquake, and the building was then demolished. Courtesy Palo Alto Historical Association.
Gradually Secundino began to slow down. He gave up his beloved trips to San Francisco to see the sights. He was not seen so often riding along the roads of the peninsula astride a handsome horse. He loved to sit in the shade of his grape arbor and have a grandchild read the newspaper to him or visit with friends passing by. His land and therefore his access to money was largely gone, but he could still offer the modest hospitality of a glass of wine. It has been said that he had more friends than any other man in California. He died, a ward of the county, on January 10, 1890, a year after Palo Alto’s first streets were laid out.

Maria Antonia survived him for several years, continuing the famous Robles hospitality by serving wine, milk, and salt, sweet tortillas to bicyclists along El Camino. Mary S. Barnes interviewed her in 1894 for an article in Sequoia, a Stanford University publication.
San Alma Homeowners Association
Attention: Mrs. Victoria Bosch
4226 Ponce
Palo Alto, California 94306

Assignment
As requested, I visually inspected the American elm (Ulmus americana) to
determine species, size, condition, location and appraised value.

Methodology
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.

The following guide for interpretation of Tree Condition as related to Life
Expectancy is submitted for your information.

<table>
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<th>Years</th>
<th>Condition</th>
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<td>Good</td>
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The adjusted trunk formula method determines the basic value and then
adjusting that value depending on the trees condition and location ratings. Basic
value is the cost of replacement and the increase in value due to the larger size
of the tree being appraised compared to the size of the replacement tree.
Please be advised that the Council of Tree and Landscape Appraisers representing The American Association of Nurserymen, American Society of Consulting Arborists, Landscape Contractors of America, International Society of Arboriculture and National Arborist Association who have approved and adopted this method of plant valuation authored this method of plant appraisal.

In determining **species** rating, factors considered include:

- climate and soil adaptability
- growth characteristics
- resistance to insects and disease
- maintenance requirements
- aesthetic values

In determining **condition** rating, factors considered include:

- rate of growth over several seasons
- structural decays or weaknesses
- presence of insects or disease
- life expectancy

In determining **location** rating, factors considered include:

- site
- functional and aesthetic contribution
- placement
Tree Description/Observation

**American elm** *(Ulmus americana)*  
Diameter standard height: 39.5"  
Height: 60' Spread: 60'  
Condition: Fair  
Location: In planter area between roads  
Observation:  
Foliage, size and color are typical of the species. I observed minor damage from chewing insects. I did not see any evidence of large dead limbs or presence of disease. Many of the scaffold limbs exhibit numerous old pruning wounds with varied degrees of callus closure. Some wounds exhibit complete wound closure, while most wounds indicate partial closure. A few of the wounds are oozing sap. The main crotch contains two pockets of deterioration approximately one-foot deep. These two cavities have decayed sixty percent of the heartwood. The root crown is maintained at natural grade and is in direct contact with overhead spray irrigation.

Discussion  
Foliage, size and color indicate normal tree vitality. The leaves indicate that nutrient and moisture uptake is adequate to sustain tree vigor. Damage to leaves from elm leaf beetle *(Galerucella xanthomeloena)* is minimal and insignificant to tree health. The healthy looking foliage shows no symptoms of Dutch elm disease *(Ceratocystis ulmi)*. Our records indicate a fungicide treatment (micro injection with AiAmo) occurred on August 12, 1998. It is advisable to continue with a Dutch elm disease prevention program. Dutch elm disease is a devastating disease throughout the United States that often kills mature Elm trees very quickly. The wounds with varied degrees of callus closure indicate the tree’s natural process, called compartmentalization of decay in trees (codit). The callus roll formation created by this process is a tree’s natural response to “seal” decay caused from wounding. Once the wounds achieve complete closure, the decay will be compartmentalized. Some of the wounds are oozing sap. This is known as slime flux or wetwood and is very common in Elm trees. It comes from a bacteria fermenting in the heartwood, which builds pressure and forces the fermented sap (slime flux) out of wounds, cracks or crotches. Slime flux rarely causes serious harm to trees.*
San Alma Homeowners Association
Attention: Mrs. Victoria Bosch
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August 4, 2000

Discussion continued
An aerial inspection of the two pockets of deterioration indicates a sixty percent loss of heartwood. This degree of decay does weaken tree structure, however, does not create an immediate hazard. Decay of the main crotch should be monitored on an annual basis. The root crown area receives spray from overhead irrigation. This can cause deterioration of bark and increase susceptibility to wood rottting pathogens.

Conclusion
The foliage and rate of growth do indicate good tree vigor. However, abnormalities such as the slim flux, decay in main crotch, and wounds not completely "sealed" influenced my condition rating to fair. The condition rating is meant to be used as a guide and not necessarily an indication of tree mortality. Adoption of tree preservation recommendations often increases life expectancy. This tree is susceptible to Dutch elm disease, as are all mature American elms.

Recommendation
Monitor cavities at main crotch annually to determine rate of decay. Continue a pruning program to reduce leverage weight every three to five years. Continue fungicide applications to aid in Dutch elm disease prevention. Maintain a spray program to control elm leaf beetle. Modify spray irrigation to prevent contact within six feet of the root crown.

Appraisal

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<td>Location Rating</td>
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Site 85% Contribution 85% Placement 80%

Appraised Value ................................................................. $10,900.00
We thank you for this opportunity to be of service in your tree preservation concerns.

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

Very truly yours,

S. P. McCLEAHAN CO., INC.

By: John H. McClenahan, Vice President
    member, American Society of Consulting Arborists
    Certified Arborist WC – ISA #1476

JHMc:pm

cc: Mr. James Burch