



ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY COMMISSION

Meeting Date: June 4, 2003
Staff Report for Agenda Item: C-3

Review Twelve Month Status Report on the Heritage Tree Ordinance and Issue Recommendations to the City Council

BACKGROUND

On March 5, 2002 the City Council approved amendments to the Heritage Tree Ordinance (Chapter 13.24 of the Municipal Code). Several public meetings were held before the Council action, during which the Environmental Quality Commission, staff and members of the public discussed possible amendments to the ordinance. There was considerable concern that, under the then-current ordinance, over 450 heritage sized trees (diameter of 24 inches measured 48 inches above grade) had been permitted for removal in the previous five years, mostly due to disease and hazardous condition. It was unknown how many large trees under that size were removed for other reasons because no permit was required. In order to ensure that there would be a healthy population of large trees in Menlo Park in the future, the Council approved protection for trees at 15 inches diameter, with the exception of native oaks and redwoods, which were protected at 10 inches diameter. A study of other cities in the Bay Area revealed that many of them have tree protection ordinances with a comparable size range. Other amendments to the ordinance included the requirement of a tree protection zone during construction and reasonable maintenance of heritage trees, increased public notification of permit applications and appeals, an application fee, considerations to be used in determining whether there is good cause for removal or heavy pruning of a heritage tree and increased penalties and remedies for violations of the ordinance.

Upon approving the amended ordinance, Council asked staff to report back to the Environmental Quality Commission in twelve months on statistics and procedures related to the new ordinance and for the Commission to make recommendations to the City Council regarding changes to the ordinance if necessary.

ANALYSIS

The report in Attachment 1 details administrative procedures for permitting and tree protection measures, as well as permit statistics and associated costs.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

The Commission is requested to provide comments on the report and recommendations for changes to the ordinance to the City Council. The Council is tentatively scheduled to review the Heritage Tree Ordinance at its regular meeting on June 17, 2003.

Dianne Dryer
Environmental Programs Coordinator, Report Author

PUBLIC NOTICE: Public Notification was achieved by posting the agenda, with this agenda item being listed, at least 72 hours prior to the meeting.

ATTACHMENT

1. [Report on Twelve Month Review of Heritage Tree Ordinance](#) (prepared by Principle Planner Justin Murphy)