Appeal of Tree Removal Permit Denial
794 Steuben Drive, Sunnyvale

We recently submitted a request for tree removal permits for three redwood trees in our back yard. We were granted permits to remove two of the trees, but denied the permit for the third and largest tree. We would like to appeal this decision based on several concerns that we have.

We believe that leaving the third tree will limit our use of the garden around the tree. Due to the close proximity of the three trees, we will be prevented from removing the stumps and roots of the two other trees for fear of endangering the roots of the third, remaining tree. This will render that corner of the garden useless.

Also, this tree has always been part of the grove of redwood trees and has little to no growth on the west side of the tree. We are concerned that the structure and strength of the tree will be reduced with the removal of the other tress which provide support.

During conversations with tree removal companies and an independent arborist, several expressed concern about the ability to remove some, but not all of the trees at the same time. They were concerned about getting the tree limbs and trunks down without damaging the remaining tree.

And last but not least is our original concern about the safety of leaving these trees standing. As was outlined in our original tree removal permit request (attached), large limbs from other redwood trees originally in the grove have fallen, causing significant property damage. While removing two of the three trees would reduce that risk, leaving one tree standing (with a health score of 70) could still result in falling limbs and damage to property.

Because of these reasons we would appreciate it if you could reconsider and grant us a tree removal permit for the third tree.

Thank you,

Amanda and Brian Estes

Reason for Removal of Redwood Trees
794 Steuben Drive, Sunnyvale

We currently have three mature redwood trees in the backyard of our property and would like to remove all of them for safety reasons. As you will see from the history of the trees and the information provided by an independent arborist (all below), we have reason to believe that one or more of the trees could fall or drop large branches on our home, resulting in severe personal and property damage.

History

When the homes in our neighborhood were completed in the mid 1970's the owners of our house, the house next door (798 Steuben Drive) and the house backing onto our back yard (1190 Pome) all planted redwood trees as part of their landscaping. These redwood trees, roughly eight total, were planted in the back corner of each property creating a grove.

In late 1995, during a heavy rain and wind storm, the top fell off one of the trees belonging to 798 Steuben Drive. This 30 foot piece fell into their home, causing significant damage to their family room. Fortunately no one was in the family room at the time so there was no personal injury. The owners of 798 Steuben Drive then had all of their redwood trees removed, reducing the grove to five trees.

Then in early 1997 the top fell off one of the trees belonging to 1190 Pome. This piece fell on the house at 798 Steuben Drive, causing damage to the roof. The owners of 1190 Pome then had all of their redwood trees removed, reducing the grove to the three trees on our property.

We purchase the home at 794 Steuben Drive in March 1997 and have had the redwood trees professionally maintained every two years since then. Based on professional advice we have not topped the trees, but have had them thinned to allow the wind to blow through them. During storms over the past few winters we have had several large branches fall in our yard and our neighbor's yard. We have begun to feel concerned that one or more of the trees may drop large pieces onto our home or someone else's.

Arborist's Review

Earlier this year we have an independent arborist come out and inspect our trees. I have included his contact information below. He inspected all three trees and provided us with the following information:

- He graded the three tree's health as 70, 60 and 50 out of 100.
- He pointed out that two of the three trees had been topped, either intentionally or by nature. Either way, these trees have a significant amount of heavy growth at the top now.

- He expressed concern about the growth pattern of one of the trees (the one receiving the health score of 50) because it grows out of the ground at a 90 degree angle, but then leans and grows at more of a 65 degree angle.
- He also expressed concern about a buttress of the same tree, saying that it looked like it had buckled.

The arborist took several pictures of the trees which I have included.

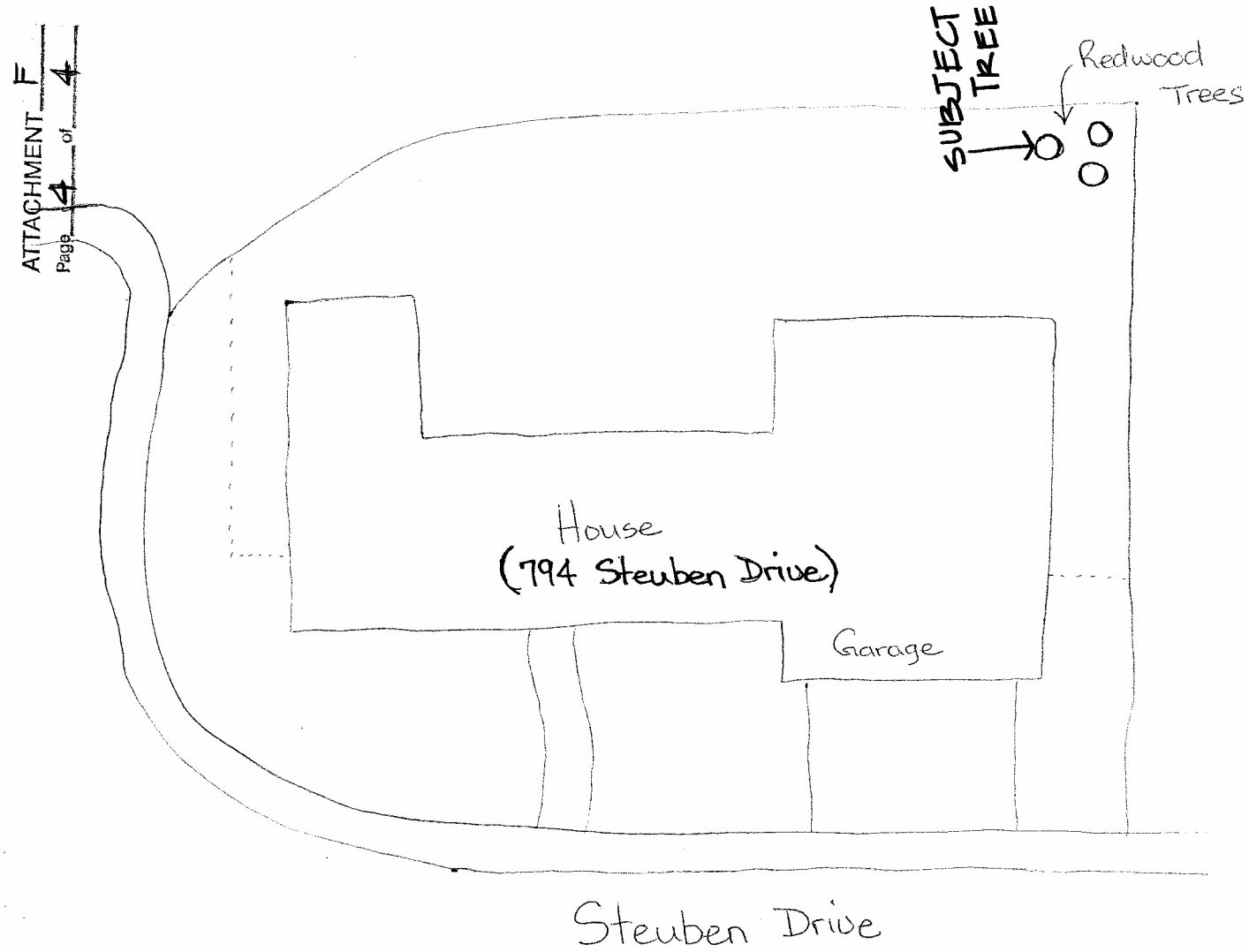
Conclusion

It was our hope that the independent arborist would be able to tell us that the trees were all in good health and that we had no reason to be concerned about them. Unfortunately this was not the case. Redwood trees are not intended to grow in small numbers, but in large groves where they can support each other. It is our belief that it was a mistake to plant redwood trees as part of the landscaping of residential property, but that cannot be changed and now we must deal with the risk involved in leaving these remaining three trees standing.

We are more than willing to replace these trees with other trees, although we do not believe that the area that the redwood trees stand in is large enough to properly support multiple trees. We therefore ask to be allowed to plant trees in different locations on our property if replacement trees are required.

Independent Arborist Contact Information

Walter Levison
(650) 697-0990


SUBJECT TREE
Redwood Trees
House
(794 Steuben Drive)
Garage
Steuben Drive