



City of Sebastopol Design Review Board/Tree Board Staff Report

Meeting Date: October 27, 2026
Agenda Item: 6A
To: Design Review & Tree Board
From: Eli Arreola, Associate Planner
Subject: Tree Removal
Recommendation: Denial
Applicant/Owner: Paul Belanger
File Number: 2026-046
Address: 562 Petaluma Ave (APN 004-094-028)
CEQA Status: Exempt
General Plan: Commercial Office (CO)
Zoning: General Commercial (CG)

Introduction:

The project applicant is seeking approval from the Design Review/Tree Board for the removal of one (1) mature Douglas-fir (*Pseudotsuga menziesii*) in the front yard at 562 Petaluma Ave, located within the Commercial Office (CO) Zoning District. The tree has a 41-inch diameter at breast height. Per Sebastopol Municipal Code section 8.12.060, trees located in commercial zones with trunks 20 inches or more require a permit and review by the Design Review/Tree Board.

Project Description:

The applicant has applied for a tree removal permit for the Douglas-fir because regular pruning for utility lines on the street side has caused the canopy to appear heavier on the house-facing side. The trunk has a slight lean towards the two houses at 562 and 568 Petaluma Ave.

Environmental Review:

The proposed tree removal is categorically exempt from the requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act, pursuant to Section 15304, Class 4, which includes minor alterations to existing topographical features, such as the removal of a tree.

Tree Protection Ordinance Consistency:

Requirements for Tree Removal Permit: Section 8.12.060.D of the Tree Protection Ordinance states that a Tree Removal Permit may be approved when an International Society of Arboriculture (ISA) Certified Arborist has verified at least one of the following conditions:

1. The tree is diseased or structurally unsound and, as a result, is likely to become a significant hazard to life or property within the next two (2) years.
2. The tree poses a likely foreseeable threat to life or property, which cannot be reasonably mitigated through pruning, root barriers, or other management methods.
3. The property owner can demonstrate that there are unreasonably onerous recurring maintenance issues, which are deemed necessary for safety or protection of property. The property owner is responsible for providing documentation to support such a claim.



4. A situation exists or is proposed in which structures or improvements, including, but not limited to, building additions, second units, swimming pools, and solar energy systems, such as solar panels, cannot be reasonably designed or altered to avoid the need for tree removal.
5. The tree has matured to such an extent that it is determined to be out of scale with adjacent structures and utilities, or with other landscape features.

Analysis:

Ben Anderson, an ISA Certified Arborist serving as the City Arborist, reviewed the application, conducted a site visit, and prepared an Arborist's Report dated September 24, 2026, attached. In summary, the report stated that the subject tree is located in the front yard planting area between the house at 562 Petaluma Avenue and the Petaluma Avenue sidewalk. The report indicates that PG&E has pruned the tree for line clearance, but it has not done extensive or clear-to-sky pruning, and foliage remains on the street side of the canopy. The trunk has a very slight lean toward the homes at 562 and 568 Petaluma Avenue, identified in Figure 1 of the Arborist's Report, and the top of the tree has lost apical dominance and no longer has a clear central leader.

In the City Arborist's report, he describes the tree canopy as having good color and density, and he saw no fungal fruiting bodies on the trunk or around the base. The report mentions that the images submitted with the application materials show a stronger lean than he observed during his site visit. He then noted that, according to the Google Street View imagery in the applicant's arborist report by Merlin Arborist Group, the lower canopy was removed between March 2019 and October 2022. He saw no evidence that the root plate has moved since. In his experience, a live crown ratio of about 50 percent is not uncommon in mature urban conifers.

According to the City Arborist, the likelihood of whole-tree failure could be reduced through properly specified reduction pruning, including shortening selected branches on the house side of the canopy and modestly reducing upper crown height where suitable lateral branches are available. Because the tree has lost apical dominance and has no clear central leader, the upper stems could be cut back to lateral branches. The report states that this is reduction pruning, not topping, which uses heading cuts to shorten stems to a predetermined height regardless of branch structure. Additionally, he mentions that cones can be removed at the same time as pruning, which further reduces load in the upper canopy.

The City Arborist recommends denial of the permit request and suggests that the likelihood of whole-tree failure can be reduced through standard arboricultural methods.

Public Comment:

All public comments received have been attached to this staff report. If public comments are received after this staff report is posted, they will be sent to the Design Review/ Tree Board and posted on the city website.

City Departmental Comment:

The proposal was routed to the various City Departments, and no comments were provided.



Recommendation:

Staff recommends that the Board review the staff report, hear from the applicant and the public, deliberate, and determine if the denial of removal of the tree is justified based on the facts, findings, and analysis outlined in this staff report.

Attachments:

Exhibit A: Recommended Findings for Denial
City Arborist Report
Application Documents
Public Comments



ATTACHMENT 1
RECOMMENDED FINDINGS FOR DENIAL

TREE REMOVAL PERMIT
Application (2026-046)
562 Petaluma Ave (APN 004-094-028)

1. The application is categorically exempt from the requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act, pursuant to Section 15304, Class 4, which includes minor alterations to existing topographical features, such as the removal of a tree.
2. **Tree Removal Criteria D.1.** - The tree is diseased or structurally unsound and, as a result, is likely to become a significant hazard to life or property within the next two years.

As part of Ben Anderson's City Arborist review, the report states that the canopy has good color and density. The lean is very slight, and he saw no evidence of root plate movement or decay fruiting bodies. The tree is not diseased, and he did not observe conditions indicating that it is structurally unsound. This criterion is not satisfied.

3. **Tree Removal Criteria D.2.** - The tree poses a likely foreseeable threat to life or property which cannot be reasonably mitigated through pruning, root barriers, or other management methods.

The City Arborist's report states that the tree leans slightly toward two homes, and a failure would likely strike a structure. The likelihood of whole tree failure could be reduced through selective reduction pruning of the house-side canopy and modest reduction of the upper crown where suitable lateral branches are available. This can be accomplished without topping. This criterion is not satisfied.

4. **Tree Removal Criteria D.3.** - The property owner can demonstrate that there are unreasonably onerous recurring maintenance issues, which are deemed necessary for safety or protection of property. The property owner is responsible for providing documentation to support such a claim.

The City Arborist's report states that the application does not include documentation of recurring maintenance issues. This criterion is not satisfied.

5. **Tree Removal Criteria D.4.** - A situation exists or is proposed in which structures or improvements, including, but not limited to, building additions, second units, swimming pools, and solar energy systems, such as solar panels, cannot be reasonably designed or altered to avoid the need for tree removal.

No structures or improvements are proposed. This criterion does not apply.



- 6. Tree Removal Criteria D.5.** - The tree has matured to such an extent that it is determined to be out of scale with adjacent structures and utilities, or with other landscape features.

The City Arborist's report states that the tree is large, but trees of this scale are part of the setting on this block, including the large coast redwoods behind the neighboring house at 554 Petaluma Avenue. The canopy has been maintained around the overhead lines through line-clearance pruning. In his opinion, the tree is not out of scale with adjacent structures, utilities, or other landscape features. This criterion is not satisfied.

Client: City of Sebastopol Planning Department
Project Location: 562 Petaluma Ave, Sebastopol, CA
Inspection Date: September 21, 2026
Arborist: Ben Anderson



Summary

The applicant has requested a permit to remove a mature Douglas-fir in the front yard of 562 Petaluma Avenue, citing its lean toward the homes at 562 and 568 Petaluma Avenue. The tree appears healthy based on this ground-based visual assessment. It has a very slight lean, and I saw no evidence of root plate movement or decay fruiting bodies. In my opinion the likelihood of whole-tree failure can be reduced through standard arboricultural methods. The application does not satisfy any of the tree removal criteria in Sebastopol Municipal Code 8.12.060(D), and I recommend denial.

Assignment

The City of Sebastopol asked me to review a tree removal permit application for a Douglas-fir at 562 Petaluma Avenue and determine whether the proposed removal is consistent with the Sebastopol Municipal Code. I inspected the tree on Monday, September 21, 2026. No one met me on site. While I was at the tree I spoke by phone with Merlin Schluberger of Merlin Arborist Group, who prepared the arborist report submitted with the application.

I reviewed the Master Planning Application, the Merlin Arborist Group report dated June 24, 2026, and a Farmers Insurance Tree Hazard Review Letter dated May 10, 2026. My inspection was a ground-based visual assessment. I did not climb the tree, excavate roots, or perform internal decay testing.

Observations

The subject tree is a Douglas-fir (*Pseudotsuga menziesii*). The application and the insurance letter refer to it as a pine; the Merlin report identifies it correctly as a Douglas-fir. I measured the trunk diameter at 41 inches at breast height. I did not measure the tree's height; the Merlin report gives it as approximately 90 feet.

The tree grows in the front yard planting area between the house at 562 Petaluma Avenue and the Petaluma Avenue sidewalk. The Merlin report places the trunk about 5.5 feet from the edge of the sidewalk. Overhead utility lines run along the street side of the tree. PG&E has pruned the tree for line clearance, but it has not done extensive or clear-to-sky pruning, and foliage remains on the street side of the canopy.

The trunk has a very slight lean toward the homes at 562 and 568 Petaluma Avenue (Figure 1). The live crown begins at about mid-height, which is consistent with the 50 percent live crown ratio given in the Merlin report. The top of the tree has lost apical dominance and no longer has a clear central leader. The canopy has good color and density. I saw no evidence of root plate movement and no fungal fruiting bodies on the trunk or



Figure 1. The subject Douglas-fir viewed from the Petaluma Avenue sidewalk, at roughly a right angle to the direction of lean. The trunk has a very slight lean toward the homes at 562 and 568 Petaluma Avenue. Foliage remains on the street side of the canopy.

around the base.

Several large coast redwoods (*Sequoia sempervirens*) stand behind the neighboring house at 554 Petaluma Avenue.

The insurance letter was prepared by an insurance agent from photographs provided by the insured. It states that it is not an arborist report, engineering opinion, or formal determination of the tree's structural integrity, and it recommends consultation with an arborist. It gives no information about the tree's condition beyond what is visible in the photograph.

Discussion

Assessing the lean. Several images in the application materials show a stronger lean than I observed. Google Street View uses a wide-angle panoramic camera, which distorts vertical lines, particularly near the edges of the frame. Photographs taken upward from close to the trunk also exaggerate a lean. A lean is best judged from a distance and at roughly a right angle to its direction. Figure 1 is taken from the sidewalk from that angle, and it is more representative of the lean I observed than the Street View image dated October 2022 in the arborist report.

Crown configuration. According to the Street View imagery in the arborist report, the lower canopy was removed between March 2019 and October 2022. That was at least four years ago, and I saw no evidence that the root plate has moved since. In my experience, a live crown ratio of about 50 percent is not uncommon in mature urban conifers.

Reducing the likelihood of failure. Pruning to reduce load is one of the standard ways of reducing a tree's likelihood of failure (Smiley, Matheny, and Lilly 2017). For this tree, the likelihood of whole-tree failure could be reduced through properly specified reduction pruning, including shortening selected branches on the house side of the canopy and modestly reducing upper crown height where suitable lateral branches are available. Because the tree has lost apical dominance and has no clear central leader, the upper stems could be cut back to lateral branches. That is reduction pruning, not topping, which uses heading cuts to shorten stems to a predetermined height regardless of branch structure (Lilly, Gilman, and Smiley 2019). The arborist report notes a heavy cone crop. Cones can be removed at the same time as pruning, which further reduces load in the upper canopy. The Sebastopol Municipal Code does not require a tree removal permit for pruning less than one-third of the tree crown (SMC 8.12.060(B)(2)).

On this point my opinion differs from the applicant's arborist's. The Merlin report concludes that removal is the only way to significantly reduce the tree's risk under current best management practices. In my opinion, standard pruning methods could reduce the likelihood of failure.

Utility pruning. If PG&E were to remove all of the foliage on the street side back to the trunk, the tree's load distribution would change and the situation would be different. As far as I know there is no plan to do this work. In my experience, when PG&E does propose extensive pruning, it is willing to negotiate with tree owners to reduce the extent of the work.

Sebastopol Municipal Code. From Sebastopol Municipal Code 8.12.060(A), "Tree removal permit, When a Tree Removal Permit Is Required":

1. Single-Family and Duplex Residential. On properties which house a single-family or duplex residential use, no person shall allow or cause the removal of a tree that has a minimum diameter at breast height (d.b.h.) of 20 inches or more if the tree has a single trunk...
2. Multifamily Residential, Commercial, or Industrial. On properties which are currently utilized for multifamily residential, commercial, or industrial uses, no person shall allow or cause the removal of a protected native tree (minimum 10 inches d.b.h.), or any other tree which has a minimum d.b.h. of 20

inches or more...

The application describes the property's use as residential/commercial. Douglas-fir is a protected native tree under SMC 8.12.040. At 41 inches d.b.h., the subject tree requires a tree removal permit under either use category.

From Sebastopol Municipal Code 8.12.060(D), "Tree Removal Criteria," at least one of the following conditions must be satisfied to approve a tree removal permit:

1. The tree is diseased or structurally unsound and, as a result, is likely to become a significant hazard to life or property within the next two years.

The canopy has good color and density. The lean is very slight, and I saw no evidence of root plate movement or decay fruiting bodies. The tree is not diseased, and I did not observe conditions indicating that it is structurally unsound. This criterion is not satisfied.

2. The tree poses a likely foreseeable threat to life or property which cannot be reasonably mitigated through pruning, root barriers, or other management methods.

The tree leans slightly toward two homes, and a failure would likely strike a structure. The likelihood of whole-tree failure could be reduced through selective reduction pruning of the house-side canopy and modest reduction of the upper crown where suitable lateral branches are available. This can be accomplished without topping. This criterion is not satisfied.

3. The property owner can demonstrate that there are unreasonably onerous recurring maintenance issues, which are deemed necessary for safety or protection of property. The property owner is responsible for providing documentation to support such a claim.

The application does not include documentation of recurring maintenance issues. This criterion is not satisfied.

4. A situation exists or is proposed in which structures or improvements, including, but not limited to, building additions, second units, swimming pools, and solar energy systems, such as solar panels, cannot be reasonably designed or altered to avoid the need for tree removal.

No structures or improvements are proposed. This criterion does not apply.

5. The tree has matured to such an extent that it is determined to be out of scale with adjacent structures and utilities, or with other landscape features.

The tree is large, but trees of this scale are part of the setting on this block, including the large coast redwoods behind the neighboring house at 554 Petaluma Avenue. The canopy has been maintained around the overhead lines through line-clearance pruning. In my opinion, the tree is not out of scale with adjacent structures, utilities, or other landscape features. This criterion is not satisfied.

Conclusions

The subject Douglas-fir is a protected native tree that requires a tree removal permit. The tree appears healthy based on this ground-based visual assessment, its lean is very slight, and I saw no evidence of root plate movement or decay. In my opinion, the likelihood of whole-tree failure can be reduced through standard arboricultural methods. The application does not satisfy any of the tree removal criteria in Sebastopol Municipal Code 8.12.060(D), and I recommend denial.

Scope of Work and Limitations

Urban Forestry Associates has no personal or monetary interest in the outcome of this investigation. All

observations regarding trees in this report were made by UFA, independently, based on our education and experience. All determinations of health condition, structural condition, or hazard potential of a tree or trees at issue are based on our best professional judgment. The health and hazard assessments in this report are limited by the visual nature of the assessment. Arborists cannot detect every condition that could possibly lead to the structural failure of a tree. Since trees are living organisms, conditions are often hidden within the tree and below ground. Arborists cannot guarantee that a tree will be healthy or safe under all circumstances, or for a specific period of time. Likewise, remedial treatments cannot be guaranteed. Trees can be managed but they cannot be controlled. To live near trees is to accept some degree of risk and the only way to eliminate all risk associated with trees is to eliminate all trees.



Benjamin Anderson, Urban Forester
ISA Board Certified Master Arborist & TRAQ
RCA #686, WE #10160B
(415) 454-4212

Received 9/8/26



City of Sebastopol

Planning Department
7120 Bodega Avenue
Sebastopol, CA 95472
(707) 823-6167

MASTER PLANNING APPLICATION FORM

APPLICATION TYPE

- | | | |
|--|---|---|
| ☐ Administrative Permit Review | ☐ Lot Line Adjustment/Merger | ☐ Temporary Use Permit |
| ☐ Alcohol Use Permit/ABC Transfer | ☐ Preapplication Conference | ☒ Tree Removal Permit |
| ☐ Conditional Use Permit | ☐ Preliminary Review | ☐ Variance |
| ☐ Design Review | ☐ Sign Permit | ☐ Other _____ |

This application includes the checklist(s) or supplement form(s) for the type of permit requested: ☒ Yes ☐ No

REVIEW/HEARING BODIES

- ☐ Staff/Admin ☒ Design Review/Tree Board ☐ Planning Commission ☐ City Council ☐ Other _____

APPLICATION FOR

Street Address: 562 Petaluma Ave

Assessor's Parcel No(s): _____

Present Use of Property: Residential/Commercial

Zoning/General Plan Designation: _____

APPLICANT INFORMATION

Property Owner Name: SerReb Properties LLC

Mailing Address: 4086 Vinings Mill Tr

Phone: 678-428-7653

City/State/ZIP: Smyrna, GA 30080

Email: Rebeccabelanger22@gmail.com

Signature: Rebecca Belanger

Date: 9/6/26

Authorized Agent/Applicant Name: Paul Belanger

Mailing Address: 4815 Occidental Rd, Unit 1

Phone: 678-446-0446

City/State/ZIP: Santa Rosa, CA 95401

Email: Pbelanger8@gmail.com

Signature: Paul Belanger

Date: 06 SEPT 26

Contact Name (If different from above): _____

Phone/Email: _____

PROJECT DESCRIPTION AND PERMITS REQUESTED (ATTACH ADDITIONAL PAGES IF NECESSARY)

I am requesting to remove a large pine tree in front of my house. See attached Arborist report that explains why this tree needs to be removed and includes specific information about the tree including pictures. Thank you.

CITY USE ONLY

Fill out upon receipt:

Application Date: _____

Planning File #: _____

Received By: _____

Fee(s): \$ _____

Completeness Date: _____

Action:

Staff/Admin: _____

Planning Director: _____

Design Review/Tree Board: _____

Planning Commission: _____

City Council: _____

Action Date:

Date: _____

Date: _____

Date: _____

Date: _____

Date: _____

SITE DATA TABLE

If an item is not applicable to your project, please indicate "Not Applicable" or "N/A" in the appropriate box; do not leave cells blank.

SITE DATA TABLE	REQUIRED / ZONING STANDARD	EXISTING	PROPOSED
Zoning	N/A		
Use	N/A		
Lot Size			
Square Feet of Building/Structures <i>(if multiple structures include all separately)</i>			
Floor Area Ratio (F.A.R.)	_____ FAR	_____ FAR	_____ FAR
Lot Coverage	_____ % of lot _____ sq. ft.	_____ % of lot _____ sq. ft.	_____ % of lot _____ sq. ft.
Parking			
Building Height			
Number of Stories			
Building Setbacks – Primary			
Front			
Secondary Front Yard (corner lots)			
Side – Interior			
Rear			
Building Setbacks – Accessory			
Front			
Secondary Front Yard (corner lots)			
Side – Interior			
Rear			
Special Setbacks (if applicable)			
Other (_____)			
Number of Residential Units	_____ Dwelling Unit(s)	_____ Dwelling Unit(s)	_____ Dwelling Unit(s)
Residential Density	1 unit per _____ sq. ft.	1 unit per _____ sq. ft.	1 unit per _____ sq. ft.
Useable Open Space	_____ sq. ft.	_____ sq. ft.	_____ sq. ft.
Grading	Grading should be minimized to the extent feasible to reflect existing topography and protect significant site features, including trees.	N/A	Total: _____ cu. yds Cut: _____ cu. yds. Fill: _____ cu. yds. Off-Haul: _____ cu. yds
Impervious Surface Area	N/A	_____ % of lot _____ sq. ft.	_____ % of lot _____ sq. ft.
Pervious Surface Area	N/A	_____ % of lot _____ sq. ft.	_____ % of lot _____ sq. ft.

CONDITIONS OF APPLICATION

1. All Materials submitted in conjunction with this form shall be considered a part of this application.
2. This application will not be considered filed and processing may not be initiated until the Planning Department determines that the submittal is complete with all necessary information and is "accepted as complete." The City will notify the applicant of all application deficiencies no later than 30 days following application submittal.
3. The property owner authorizes the listed authorized agent(s)/contact(s) to appear before the City Council, Planning Commission, Design Review/Tree Board and Planning Director and to file applications, plans, and other information on the owner's behalf.
4. The Owner shall inform the Planning Department in writing of any changes.
5. **INDEMNIFICATION AGREEMENT:** As part of this application, applicant agrees to defend, indemnify, release and hold harmless the City, its agents, officers, attorneys, employees, boards, committees and commissions from any claim, action or proceeding brought against any of the foregoing individuals or entities, the purpose of which is to attack, set aside, void or annul the approval of this application or the adoption of the environmental document which accompanies it or otherwise arises out of or in connection with the City's action on this application. This indemnification shall include, but not be limited to, damages, costs, expenses, attorney fees or expert witness fees that may be asserted by any person or entity, including the applicant, arising out of or in connection with the City's action on this application, whether or not there is concurrent passive or active negligence on the part of the City.

If, for any reason, any portion of this indemnification agreement is held to be void or unenforceable by a court of competent jurisdiction, the remainder of the agreement shall remain in full force and effect.

NOTE: The purpose of the indemnification agreement is to allow the City to be held harmless in terms of potential legal costs and liabilities in conjunction with permit processing and approval.

6. **REPRODUCTION AND CIRCULATION OF PLANS:** I hereby authorize the Planning Department to reproduce plans and exhibits as necessary for the processing of this application. I understand that this may include circulating copies of the reduced plans for public inspection. Multiple signatures are required when plans are prepared by multiple professionals.
7. **NOTICE OF MAILING:** Email addresses will be used for sending out staff reports and agendas to applicants, their representatives, property owners, and others to be notified.
8. **DEPOSIT ACCOUNT INFORMATION:** Rather than flat fees, some applications require a 'Deposit'. The initial deposit amount is based on typical processing costs. However, each application is different and will experience different costs. The City staff and City consultant time, in addition to other permit processing costs, (i.e., legal advertisements and copying costs are charged against the application deposit). If charges exceed the initial deposit, the applicant will receive billing from the City's Finance department. If at the end of the application process, charges are less than the deposit, the City Finance department will refund the remaining monies. Deposit accounts will be held open for up to 90 days after action or withdrawal for the City to complete any miscellaneous clean up items and to account for all project related costs.
9. **NOTICE OF ORDINANCE/PLAN MODIFICATIONS:** Pursuant to Government Code Section 65945(a), please indicate, by checking the boxes below, if you would like to receive a notice from the City of any proposal to adopt or amend any of the following plans or ordinances if the City determines that the proposal is reasonably related to your request for a development permit:

☐ A general plan

☐ A specific plan

☐ An ordinance affecting building permits or grading permits

☐ A zoning ordinance

Certification

I, the undersigned owner of the subject property, have read this application for a development permit and agree with all of the above and certify that the information, drawings and specifications herewith submitted are true and correct to the best of my knowledge and belief and are submitted under penalty of perjury. I hereby grant members of the Planning Commission, Design Review Board and City Staff admittance to the subject property as necessary for processing of the project application.

Property Owner's Signature: Rebecca Belanger

Date: 9/8/24

I, the undersigned applicant, have read this application for a development permit and agree with all of the above and certify that the information, drawings and specifications herewith submitted are true and correct to the best of my knowledge and belief and are submitted under penalty of perjury.

Applicant's Signature: [Signature]

Date: 08 SEPT 26

NOTE: It is the responsibility of the applicant and their representatives to be aware of and abide by City laws and policies. City staff, Boards, Commissions, and the City Council will review applications as required by law; however, the applicant has responsibility for determining and following applicable regulations.

Neighbor Notification

In the interest of being a good neighbor, it is highly recommended that you contact those homes or businesses directly adjacent to, or within the area of your project. Please inform them of the proposed project, including construction activity and possible impacts such as noise, traffic interruptions, dust, larger structures, tree removals, etc.

Many projects in Sebastopol are remodel projects which when initiated bring concern to neighboring property owners, residents, and businesses. Construction activities can be disruptive, and additions or new buildings can affect privacy, sunlight, or landscaping. Some of these concerns can be alleviated by neighbor-to-neighbor contacts early in the design and construction process.

It is a "good neighbor policy" to inform your neighbors so that they understand your project. This will enable you to begin your construction with the understanding of your neighbors and will help promote good neighborhood relationships.

Many times, development projects can have an adverse effect on the tranquility of neighborhoods and tarnish relationships along the way. If you should have questions about who to contact or need property owner information in your immediate vicinity, please contact the Building and Safety Department for information at (707) 823-8597, or the Planning Department at (707) 823-6167.

I have informed site neighbors of my proposed project: ☐ Yes ☐ No

If yes, or if you will inform neighbors in the future, please describe outreach efforts:

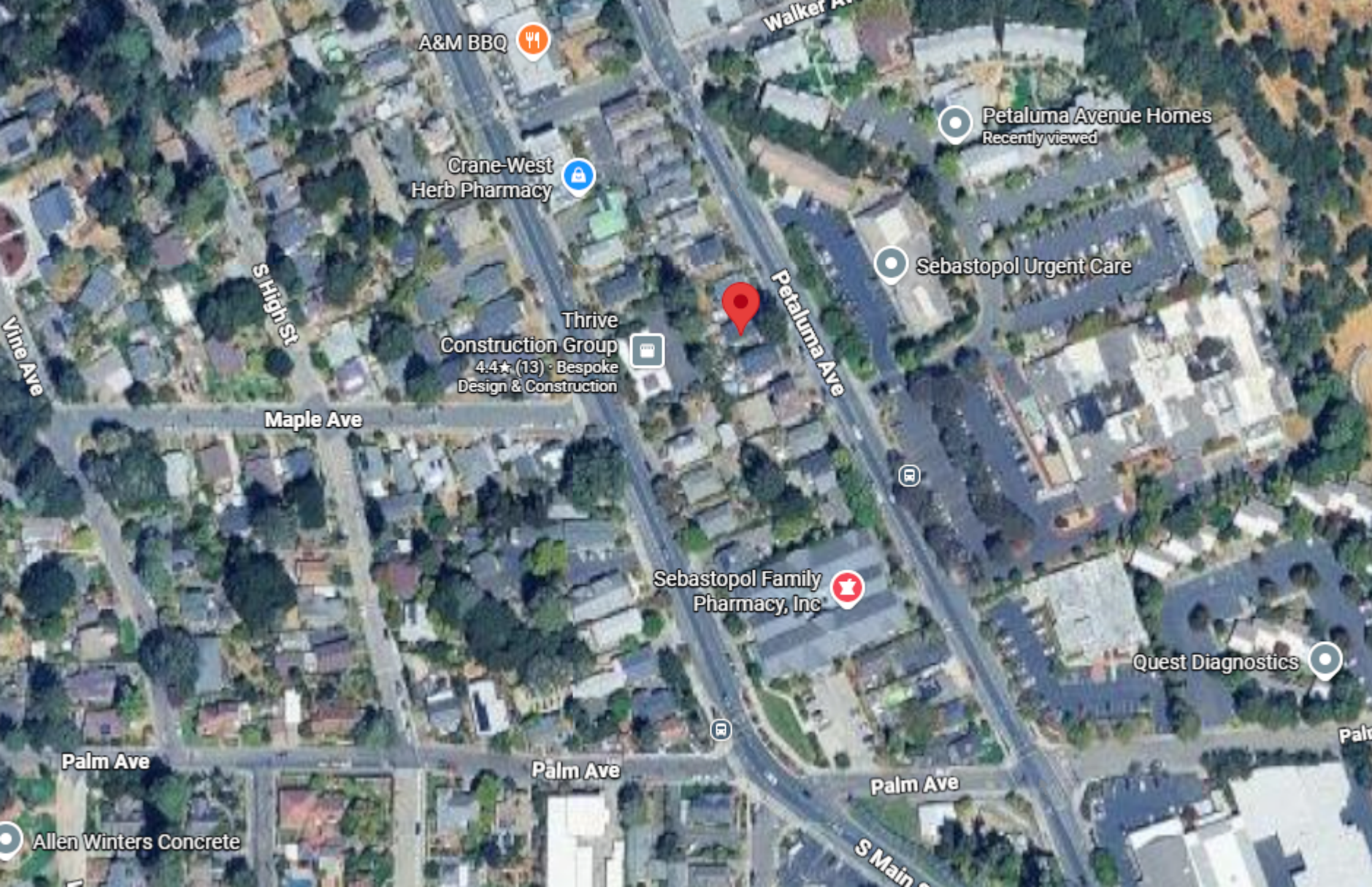
Website Required for Major Projects

Applicants for major development projects (which involves proposed development of **10,000 square feet of new floor area or greater, or 15 or more dwelling units/lots**), are required to create a project website in conjunction with submittal of an application for Planning approval (including but not limited to Subdivisions, Use Permits, Rezoning, and Design Review). Required information may be provided on an existing applicant web site.

The website address shall be provided as part of the application. The website shall be maintained and updated, as needed until final discretionary approvals are obtained for the project.

Such website shall include, at a minimum, the following information:

- ✓ Project description
- ✓ Contact information for the applicant, including address, phone number, and email address
- ✓ Map showing project location
- ✓ Photographs of project site
- ✓ Project plans and drawings



A&M BBQ



Crane-West
Herb Pharmacy



Thrive
Construction Group
4.4★ (13) · Bespoke
Design & Construction



Petaluma Avenue Homes
Recently viewed



Sebastopol Urgent Care



Sebastopol Family
Pharmacy, Inc.



Quest Diagnostics



Vine Ave

S High St

Maple Ave

Petaluma Ave

Palm Ave

Palm Ave

Palm Ave

S Main St

Allen Winters Concrete

Received 9/8/26



Tree Hazard Review Letter

Date: May 10, 2026

Insured: Becky Belanger (SerReb Properties)

Property Address: 562 Petaluma Ave, Sebastopol, CA 95472-4216

To Whom It May Concern,

Following a recent inspection and review of the property located at 562 Petaluma Ave, Sebastopol, CA 95472-4216, we noted a large pine tree situated in close proximity to the residence and nearby utility lines.

Based on the visible conditions shown in the photographs provided, the tree appears to be in close proximity to the dwelling and utility lines, with a noticeable lean toward the residence. Given the apparent height, size, and positioning of the tree relative to the structure, there is concern for potential property damage exposure in the event of tree failure, severe weather, shifting soil conditions, or additional branch removal activity near the utility lines.

We also understand that PG&E; may be performing trimming or removal of limbs located near the power lines adjacent to the property. Depending on the extent of trimming, this could potentially impact the tree's balance and overall stability.

As the property insurer, we support the insured's request to proactively mitigate any potential hazards that could pose a risk to the insured structure and surrounding property. Removal of the tree may help reduce the possibility of future property damage or liability exposure.

Please note this letter is provided for general insurance risk mitigation purposes only and is not intended to serve as an arborist report, engineering opinion, or formal determination regarding the structural integrity of

the tree. We recommend consultation with a licensed arborist or qualified tree professional for any final evaluation or removal recommendations.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact our office.



Photo provided by insured showing the subject tree in close proximity to the residence and utility lines.

Sincerely,

Benjamin Battle

Farmers Insurance Agent

Ben Battle Insurance Agency, Inc.

41758 12th St W Ste F

Palmdale, CA 93551

License Number: 0K09306

Office: 661-949-0241

Email: bbattle@farmersagent.com

Website: www.farmersagent.com/bbattle



Merlin Arborist Group

ISA Board Master Certified Arborist WE-7670B

ISA Tree Risk Assessor (TRAQ)

ASCA Tree and Plant Appraisal Qualified (TPAQ)

ASCA Registered Consulting Arborist RCA# 687

June 24, 2026

Attn: Rebecca Belanger
562 Petaluma Avenue
Sebastopol, CA 95472

Dear Rebecca Belanger,

Following my inspection and our conversation about the tree on the property at 562 Petaluma Avenue in Sebastopol, I offer the following notes and conclusions.

The tree is a Douglas fir (*Pseudotsuga menziesii*) that is about 90 feet tall. It has a diameter at breast height (dbh) of 41 inches and a live crown ratio (lcr) of about 50%. It is located in front of the house in a planting area between the house and Petaluma Avenue. It is about 5.5 feet away from the edge of the sidewalk and it is likely there are underground utilities located under the sidewalk.

The tree has visible signs of regular pruning for the utility lines on the street side (Image 1). The canopy of the tree appears heavier on the house-facing side of the tree (Image 2). The trunk has a slight lean towards the house in the lower part of the tree. The lean increases higher up the tree. The lean is towards the two houses at 562 and 568, though it is slightly closer to the house at 562 (Image 3). Google street view historical imagery suggests that the entire lower canopy was removed between March 2019 and October 2022 (Images 4 and 5). If the tree were to fail, branches would likely impact both houses and trunk would likely impact the house at 562. The tree has an unusually high crop of cones.

A low live crown ratio increases tree stress from wind and may make it more likely to fail. The limited volume for root growth, as well as possible historical root damage from paving and underground utilities are also additional stress factors for the tree's structure. If and when this tree fails it is very likely to impact structures due to its lean. Trees have inherent risk as well as inherent value, managing them requires an understanding of the risk. If there is no tolerance to risk, the only way to eliminate the risk is to remove the tree. There is no way to significantly reduce this tree's risk following current best management practices, other than fully removing the tree.



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ISA Tree Risk Assessor (TRAQ)

ASCA Tree and Plant Appraisal Qualified (TPAQ)

ASCA Registered Consulting Arborist RCA# 687

Please let me know if you have any further questions regarding these trees.

Sincerely,

Merlin Schluberger

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Image 1: Pruning on the street side for utility clearance.



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Image 2: Slight lean and the canopy is larger and heavier on the house-facing side.



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Image 3: Tree is leaning towards the houses at 562 and 568.



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Google 100% [Data attribution](#) Mar 2019

Image 4: Google Earth Image, March 2019



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Google 100% [Data attribution](#) Oct 2022

Image 4: Google Earth Image, October 2022

From: [REDACTED]

Sent: Monday, October 19, 2026 2:58 PM

To: Eli Arreola <earreola@cityofsebastopol.gov>

Subject: Project ID: 2026-046

Re: Tree Removal Permit Request / 562 Petaluma Ave

I have no objection to the removal of the Douglas fir in the front yard of 562 Petaluma Ave. The tree has been heavily pruned over the years as it grew in order to avoid the utility lines running in front of the house. At this point it has been so heavily pruned that it looks more like a "Q-Tip" than a tree.

Doug Yule



From: Sally Anderson [REDACTED]

Sent: Monday, October 19, 2026 3:15 PM

To: Eli Arreola <earreola@cityofsebastopol.gov>

Subject: Enthusiastic approval of tree removal 562 Petaluma Ave.

To whom it may concern:

I live at 635 S. Main.

I'm a member of the CA Native Plant Society.

I've spent much of my life nurturing gardens, including planting many trees .

I LOVE trees, and think the world would be better off with tree planting projects galore.

However, "right plant, right place" is a phrase that sums up being thoughtful about when/where to plant a particular tree.

A urban yard in our climate is NOT a good fit for a Douglas fir.

This past year I heard a story from a long time local as to why there are so many similar sized, utterly inappropriately planted single Doug Firs planted in small Sebastopol yards. Evidently, on the first Earth Day some 50 years ago, some well meaning person brought scores of Fir seedlings to Analay and gave them to any students who said they would go home and "plant a tree".

Seemed like a good idea at the time.....

They shouldn't be planted as a solitary tree, and most have long outgrown their location.

There's an equally large, rather unhappy looking one behind my house.

I wish I had the resources to remove it.

Sally Anderson