



RECEIVED on 06/07/2022 CDTP21-00076
By Contra Costa County
Department of Conservation and Development

June 6, 2022

Dan and Sibhan Stokes
130 Oak Bridge Lane
Martinez, CA 94553

Re: Arborist Pier Review Assessment of Oaks Proposed for Removal on the 5 Casa De Campo Property

Dear Mr. & Mrs. Stokes,

Per your request, and approved by the county, the following arborist report is an assessment of the grove of oaks located on the undeveloped Casa De Campo property located downslope and to the east of your property.

Assignment

I was asked to look at a previously assessed grove of 35 native oaks and one bay that are part of an extensive oak woodland lining the west edge of the lower property to be developed. The Stokes have concerns regarding the plan to remove 26 protected oaks, and how that might affect screening between them and other homes. While the Stokes are not opposed to the development of the lot, they would like the design to consider saving some of the trees in an effort to retain more of the screening.

Introduction / Observations

The project arborist (PA) for the development had inventoried 35 native oaks and one bay laurel back in October of 2021. Only 4 trees were given a fair rating, and all the rest were rated as poor (19), critical (8), or dead (5). It was recommended to remove the 26 trees that are dead, or in critical to poor condition. The basis for the recommendations are to reduce fire fuel loads by removing the dead trees or trees in poor condition that will become a greater fire concern as they decline. Critical trees were described as those with heavy leans that could pose a risk to the property.

It is my opinion that the arborist looked at each tree individually and not as being part of a grove. This would reduce both their health and structural ratings. Trees with phototropic leans due to the adjacent over-story canopies adapt over the years and are less likely to fail as would an isolated tree that leans. In addition leaning trees with no targets placed under them are not considered a risk.

I also observed a few trees that appeared to be miss-rated or miss-identified in the report. Tree #293 listed as a 19" coast live oak in critical condition is actually a multi-stemmed tree measuring 19", 17", 15", & 12". The tree is actually one of the healthiest trees in the grove, and although it does have co-dominant leader attachments, that defect could easily be mitigated with some minor pruning and or cabling.

Tree #4198 is listed as being dead and is actually in fairly good condition. Tree #2770 listed as a 30" oak is only 11" in diameter and is right next to a 30" oak that has no tag. There are at least 7 other trees that I would upgrade their conditions to fair from critical or poor.

Discussion

Although none of these trees are uniquely special on their own accord, as a grove they work together as a nice woodland habitat that provides valuable screening from existing homes below as well as the proposed home location. As far as fire concerns, there are a few dead trees and some large lower dead branches and understory grasses that could be removed to reduce fuel load and help beautify the grove.

I am not sure of the development constraints on this lot, however, it would seem that a combination of fewer removals and a slight adjustment of the home location might provide the opportunity to preserve enough of this grove to retain some valuable screening.

Recommendation

I recommend reducing the total number of trees removed down to 12, consisting of the dead trees #2768, 4149, 4150, 4197, two trees leaning heavily over road (#4143 & 4147), as well as live trees # 4157, 4181, 4182, 4183, 4184, & 4185 along the east edge of the grove. The last 6 removals are to accommodate an adjusted building footprint. Limits of grading would need to be reduced as well to respect the root zones of trees to remain.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide this assessment, and please feel free to contact me if there are any questions.

Tree map and photos attached.

Sincerely,



John C Traverso
ISA Board Certified Master Arborist #WE-0206-B
ISA Tree Risk Assessor Qualified
ISA Certified Climber Specialist #WE-0206T



Tree #293 listed as being in critical condition and only 19" in diameter.



Trees #497 & 498 both listed as dead. Tree #498 is healthy with a phototropic lean that could be pruned a bit to make more pleasing and less on end weight. This tree would help with screening and erosion as well.



Grove of trees approved for removal. Canopies provide screening of lower home to the left from the Stokes residence up slope to the right.