

**Cedar tree appeal**  
**952 El Cajon Way, Palo Alto**

**Appeal date:**

February 12th 9am, City Hall Palo Alto

**Summary:**

This cedar tree at 952 El Cajon Way is a healthy, mature tree that contributes significantly to the character and environmental quality of our neighborhood. Residents opposing its removal want to emphasize the benefits it provides, including shade, aesthetic value, and support for local wildlife. Concerns cited for its removal, such as minor sap drop and potential root intrusion, are issues that homeowners across Palo Alto manage without resorting to cutting down established trees. Notably, a city arborist has indicated that well-maintained cedar trees pose minimal risk to foundations and require only occasional pruning. Given the city's commitment to preserving its urban canopy, removing a thriving tree for reasons that could apply to countless others sets a troubling precedent.

This appeal urges the City of Palo Alto to reconsider the permit application and uphold policies that protect valuable trees. Neighbors have shared below firsthand accounts of the tree's positive impact, along with skepticism over the necessity of its removal. Alternative solutions exist for managing root-related infrastructure concerns without resorting to destruction. The loss of this tree would diminish the neighborhood's greenery, weaken climate resilience efforts, and send the wrong message about Palo Alto's approach to conservation. We ask the city to reject this application and maintain its commitment to urban forestry.



## Quotes from our neighbors

### Yasong Z.

*"[...] after moving in, my perspective changed completely. The joy and benefits these mature trees—whether Cedar, Camphor, or another species—bring to our lives far outweigh the concerns. They provide shade, are pleasing to look at, and attract lovely birds. Now, I manage the Cedar sap with the same care I would with fallen leaves from other trees. They are just part of the nature that we need to deal with by living in a house. Recently, we start to take after-dinner walks to nearby neighborhoods, such as Old Palo Alto. Every time I pass by their neighborhood, I see even bigger Cedar, Redwood and all sorts of trees living in their front and back yards. I start to wonder - do those people not concern about these trees being so close to their homes at all? I don't know if any of them have gone through a fight with their foundations, but I do know Old Palo Alto looks gorgeous and is considered one of the prestigious neighborhoods. Their nice tree lines definitely play a big role there.*

*While I'm not an expert on Cedar maintenance and foundation risks, I can share what I've learned from a professional. A few months ago, Paul F., a Project Manager from Urban Forestry section of the City of Palo Alto, inspected our Cedar trees before the fiber optics cable upgrade. He mentioned that Cedar trees produce sap mainly in late spring and summer, so they typically avoid pruning until fall to prevent infections. Paul also noted that mature Cedar trees grow slowly and require pruning only every 5-8 years, which is less frequent compared to other trees. As for foundation concerns, Paul pointed out that these Cedar trees were established long before our neighborhood was built. If well-maintained, their root systems shouldn't pose a significant risk to foundations. Conversely, improper removal of these trees could lead to root decay and potential foundation issues."*

### Yi Z.

*"I'm usually against cutting down healthy trees, especially big and beautiful trees. It's hard to gauge how real the cited reasons are, I think cracked sidewalks and sewer lines both should have alternatives than cutting, the gas line concern seems dangerous, but it could apply to many trees.*

*Having said that, I find myself debating with my wife from time to time on our backyard trees, so I know this can be subjective and personal."*





**Ed Y.**

*"We know that tree roots are a problem for sewage, but if that is the justification, many trees in Palo Alto need to be cut down, and I haven't seen them getting culled. I'm happy to make that point to the city. We are within 300 ft and received the notice"*

**Prasad A.**

*"We landed up running a CIPP process on our sewer lines after the roots of the several large trees in our yard started putting holes in the sewage lines."*

#### **Emails shared with the city (from Ed Lafargue)**

**September 9 2024**

Dear city of Palo Alto,

We live at 972 el Cajon Way, and have received a notice for a tree removal permit application for one of the trees in our immediate neighborhood.

We are very surprised by this application: the tree is in great health. It is well maintained and while it is large, it does not block any circulation or pose any problem that could qualify it as a public nuisance as per 08.04.050.

We would like to register our disagreement with this permit application and the legitimacy of the motive, which does not appear to be covered by any of the reasons for removing a protected tree. Is there a period of recourse? How does the process work for the verification by the city that the request is justified?

Finally, this tree brings a lot of character to this part of the neighborhood, and its disappearance would be very noticeable. In times when city trees have to deal with hydric stress in a changing climate, surely we must all do everything that we can to protect our trees and preserve the character of our community, removing a tree should only be a solution of last resort.



**November 23 2024**

Dear City of Palo Alto,

We have just received application 24TRE-00134, which is a new attempt by our neighbors to cut down the beautiful cedar tree that is at the end of our street.

I wanted to emphasize that this tree location is, as far as I can tell, away from any utility lines, it is also in great health - despite the homeowners cutting some of its lower limbs recently - , and it is in a perfect location in the street.

Our neighbors stated recently that the main reason why they dislike the tree is that it tends to drop leaves and a bit of sap on the car they park in their driveway, which is hardly a reason to kill a perfectly good tree.

We sincerely hope that the city will consider our comments when reviewing this application, and will continue protecting the trees that make our city so beautiful.

## **December 9 2024**

### **Appeal**

1. Tree Removal Permit Application number  
24TRE-00134

1. Address of the tree in question  
952 El Cajon Way, Palo Alto CA, 94303

1. If known, the size and species information for the tree in question  
  
Cedar tree, about 30ft tall

1. Reason for requesting an appeal

The tree is in good health and does not seem to cause any significant issue - there are many large trees in Palo Alto whose root system can spread widely, and using the spread of the root system and its impact on the sewer line sets a worrying precedent, that could lead to the justification of removal of many trees for the same reason, rather than simply fixing the sewer issues.

## **Previous cases**

Palo Alto Online, November 7 2015: "City to residents: Don't sign PG&E tree removal contracts".

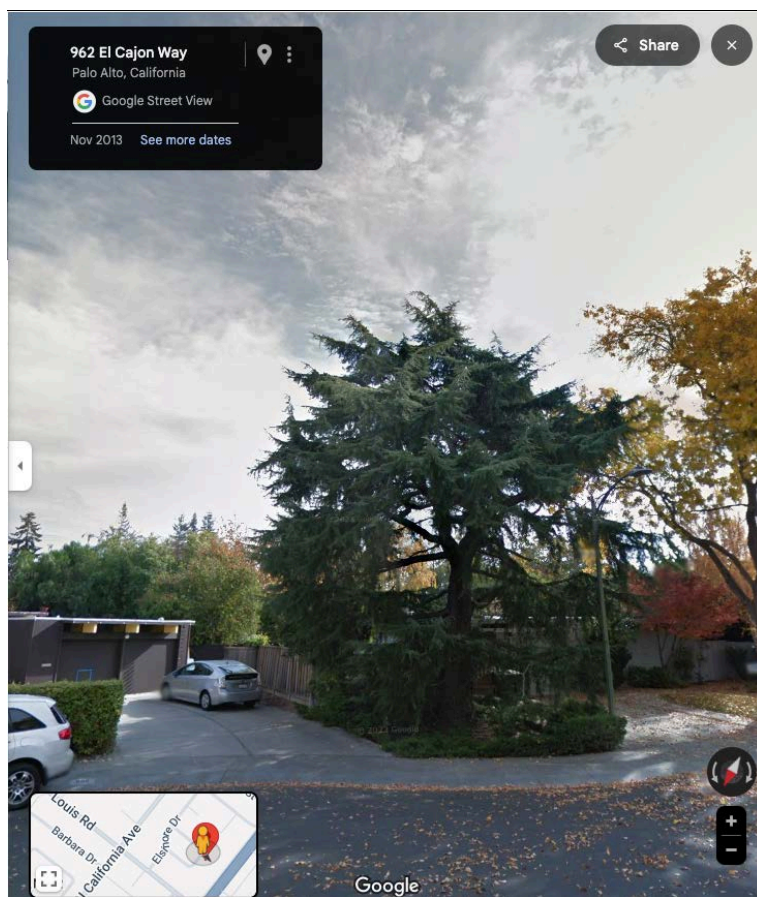
<https://www.paloaltoonline.com/news/2015/11/07/city-to-residents-dont-sign-pge-tree-removal-contracts/>

*"Concerned about Pacific Gas & Electric's plan to chop down potentially hundreds of mature trees in Palo Alto, city officials have sent an email to neighborhood groups advising residents not to sign any agreements with the utility company regarding tree removal until the city has assessed and come to an agreement with PG&E."*

Palo Alto Online, December 3 2015: "PG&E hits the 'rewind button' on tree removals in Palo Alto"

<https://www.paloaltoonline.com/news/2015/12/03/pge-sets-the-rewind-button-on-tree-removals/>

## Photos of the tree over time



2013

2011

