



ITEM FOR ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSION AGENDA

COMMISSION MEETING DATE: January 19th, 2022

NAME & NUMBER OF PROJECT: Rainey Tower
SPC-2021-0129C

NAME OF APPLICANT OR ORGANIZATION: Lincoln Ventures LLC

LOCATION: 78-84 Rainey Street

COUNCIL DISTRICT: District 9

CITY ARBORIST: Naomi Rotramel (512) 974-9135 naomi.rotramel@austintexas.gov

ORDINANCE: Heritage Tree Ordinance (LDC 25-8-641)

REQUEST: The applicant is seeking the removal of a Heritage tree with a single stem over 30 inches in diameter.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION: The request meets the City Arborist approval criteria set forth in LDC 25-8-624(A)(2), thus the variance is recommended.



MEMORANDUM

TO: City of Austin Environmental Commission

FROM: Naomi Rotramel, City Arborist Program,
Development Services Department

DATE: January 19th, 2022

CASE FOLDER: SPC-2021-0129C

REQUEST: The applicant is seeking the removal of a Heritage tree with a single stem over 30 inches in diameter.

Project Description

The subject property is located at 78-84 Rainey Street. The lot size is 0.6614 acres and is zoned CBD.

The property is located in the Rainey Street – Waterfront overlay. The property is located in the Waller Creek and Lady Bird Lake watersheds, both classified as urban watersheds.

The site is currently being operated as a Cocktail Lounge / Office with current impervious cover of 84%. The proposed use is for a 587 residential unit tower with retail, onsite parking and cocktail lounge with impervious cover of 92%.

The applicant requested a predevelopment site consultation with the City Arborist. There are currently two Protected trees and three Heritage trees on site. One Protected tree and one Heritage tree are proposed to be removed.

A 32.5 inch Heritage pecan is requested for removal and per Land Development Code would require a Land Use Commission variance.

Tree Evaluation

Tree 2145 Pecan

Measurements

The subject tree is one Heritage 32.5 inch pecan (#2145 / 5011)

Canopy Conditions

Unbalanced crown; thin canopy; 12+ limb breaks 3-6" diameter in canopy; heavily pruned likely due to several previous failures

Structure / Trunk

Co-dominant leaders; previous 10" limb failure south side of trunk; previous 8" limb failure north side resulting in damage to roof and house of adjacent building; 27" longitudinal crack in main trunk (west side) 7 ft from grade. Tomography was done at the supporting union of the canopy, results indicate it may be structurally compromised.

Root System

Buried root flare – compacted 7-12" fill; damage to buttress root

Overall Condition

Fair condition; poor structure; history of large previous failures

Variance Request

The variance request is to allow removal of a Heritage tree with a stem greater than 30 inches as allowed under LDC 25-8-643.

Recommendation

The City Arborist recommends removal of the tree due to the applicant demonstrating that the tree prevents reasonable use of the site.

Based upon tree location, zoning, site characteristics, and the proposed use, the City Arborist believes the applicant has provided sufficient evidence that LDC 25-8-624(A)(2) has been met. Further there do not appear to be any waivers, variances, or modifications of code that would allow development concurrent with the preservation of the tree.

Mitigation

The Environmental Criteria Manual standard is 300% mitigation. Mitigation for this site shall be addressed by further enhancing the streetscape planting conditions. The applicant has proposed a menu of options that support greater tree health and longevity such as structural soil cells, permeable paving, and continuous planting beds.

Please contact 512-974-9135 or naomi.rotramel@austintexas.gov if you have questions.

Exhibit 1: Whole tree and co-dominant leaders



Exhibit 2: Large previous failures



Damage to present building



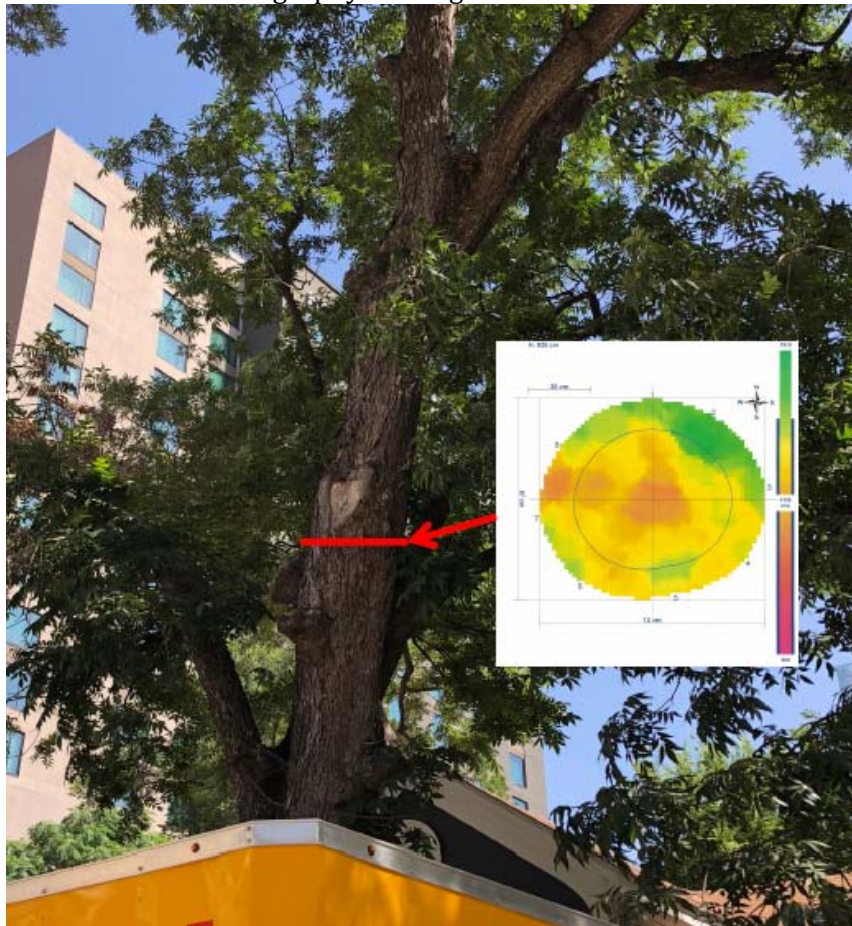
Exhibit 3: Horizontal and longitudinal cracks 7ft above grade



Exhibit 4: Unbalanced crown



Exhibit 5: Sonic Tomography reading



The green areas represent sound wood, where the sound traveled quickly between the sensors.

The yellow suggests less sound wood, where the sound traveled slower.

The orange and red suggest cracks or pockets of decay where the sound moved very slowly between the sensors.

Scan at 625 cm

This scan shows less sound wood in the center and extending outwards through the shell wall between sensors 3-8, and between 8-1. This scan was taken below an old, exposed pruning wound, and above branch nubs. Failure of this portion of the tree would result in the loss of a significant part of the tree canopy (Image 2). Eight sensors were used in this scan. The scan at this level is structurally compromised.

