

**Client:** Elliot James

**Arborist:** Zach Vought

**Project Address:** 206 Grandview Avenue, Novato

**Inspection Date:** November 4, 2019



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## Assignment

Elliot James contacted Urban Forestry Associates to request an inspection of two coast live oak trees (See Figure 1) at 206 Grandview Avenue in unincorporated Novato. The purpose of the assessment was to document the condition of the trees, both of which are slated for removal as a part of a remodel project. This report documents the condition of the trees, addresses their suitability for preservation for the project.

## Observations

### Tree 1

Species coast live oak (*Quercus agrifolia*)

Size 29.9-inch Dbh<sup>1</sup> qualifying as "Heritage" per Main County tree Ordinance

Location South corner of the home. The trunk is less than one foot from the foundation and the canopy extends over the home (Figure 3). There is a crack in the foundation immediately adjacent to the trunk.

### Condition

Health Good. The complexion of the canopy appears normal.

Structure Fair. At approximately six and eight feet above grade, two large stems were removed from the tree in the past. Decay cavities have formed at these aging pruning wounds (Figure 3). The tree became top heavy as a result of the stems being removed.

Form Fair. Tree-1 and Tree-2 share canopy space.

### Tree 2

Species coast live oak (*Quercus agrifolia*)

Size 22.3-inch Dbh qualifying as "Heritage" per Main County tree Ordinance

Location Near the south corner of the home approximately five feet from Tree-1.

### Condition

Health Good.

Structure Fair. The tree possesses a moderate trunk lean east. There is a cavity, at approximately 15 feet above grade on the trunk at where a branch failure occurred in the past (See Figure 4).

Form Poor. The canopy is markedly asymmetric to the east (See Figure 4).

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<sup>1</sup> Dbh- tree diameter measured at 4.5 feet above grade with a Spencer loggers tape.

## Discussion

Per the Marin County Planning Division [Tree Removal Permit Fact Sheet](#) Tree-1 and Tree-2 qualify as "Heritage" based on their trunk diameters. The fact sheet includes a list of exemptions. If a protected or heritage tree meet one of the criteria for removal, then it is exempt from Tree Removal Permit requirements. For example, if a tree is dead or dying, and structurally unstable and threatens a home, the tree would qualify for an exemption.

### Tree-1

Tree-1 possesses two significant issues. First, the trunk and structural roots are within one foot of the home foundation where a crack was identified. Considering the size of the tree and proximity to the foundation it is very likely the tree is contributing to the crack. The foundation stands within the zone where large roots responsible for the overall stability of the tree are likely to be found. Large root can be thought of as anything three inches in diameter or larger. Such roots have a higher likelihood of causing damage when conflicts with infrastructure occur as the root increases in diameter. In some cases, selective root pruning is an option to mitigate damage but in this situation the foundation is so close to the tree that impacts to tree stability are likely if more than one 3-inch root were severed.

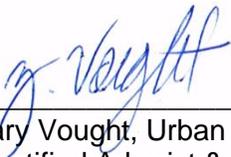
The second issue with Tree-1 is the two large pruning wounds on the trunk. Each of the cuts is actively decaying and there is no accepted method of halting the decay. As each of the wounds continues to decay the trunk will weaken, and the whole tree will be less stable. Currently the cavities are contributing to an elevated risk of trunk failure which will only increase with time. For these reasons Tree-1 is scheduled for removal as a part of the project.

### Tree-2

Tree-2 is generally in fair overall condition. Grown near Tree-1 for many years both trees share canopy space which has influenced the strong bow and asymmetry in the canopy of Tree-2. The lean in the main stem and strong canopy asymmetry along with a cavity in the trunk are the most notable structural problems. As it now stands Tree-2 is not particularly concerning in terms of overall risk if it were to fail, however if Tree-1 were removed, Tree-2 would be left exposed, and subjected to different wind patterns which could elevate the likelihood of failure.

## Conclusion

1. Tree-1 is exempt from removal permit requirements per exemption D of the Tree Removal Permit Fact Sheet.  
*D. The tree is a public nuisance by causing damage to improvements, such as building foundations, retaining walls, roadways/driveways, patios, sidewalks and decks, or interfering with the operation, repair, or maintenance of public utilities;*
2. Tree-2 has a poor suitability for preservation due to its suboptimal structural condition and form. It should be removed as it will be left in a precarious structural condition after the removal of Tree-1.



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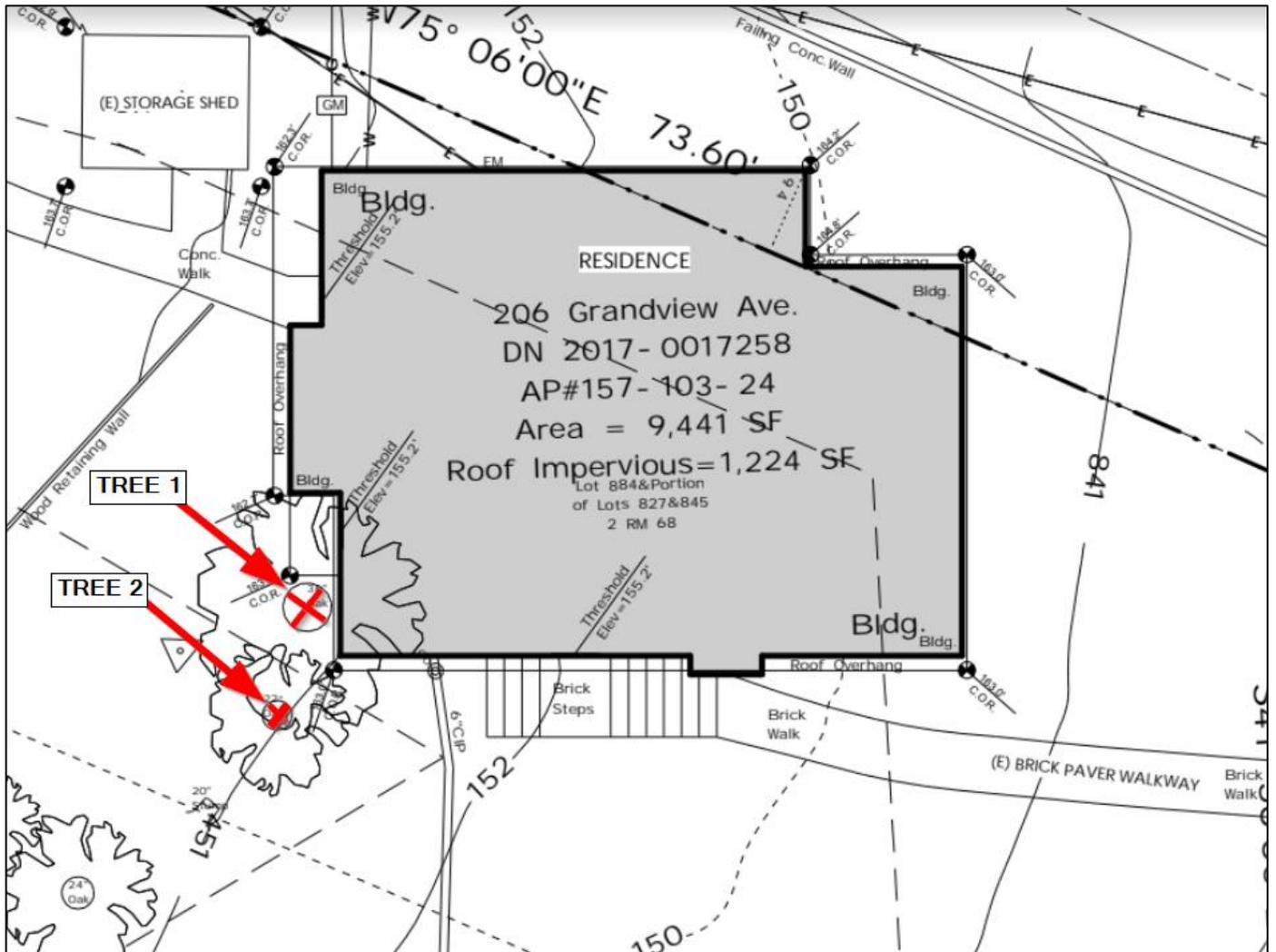


Figure 1. Tree Locations shown on site plan

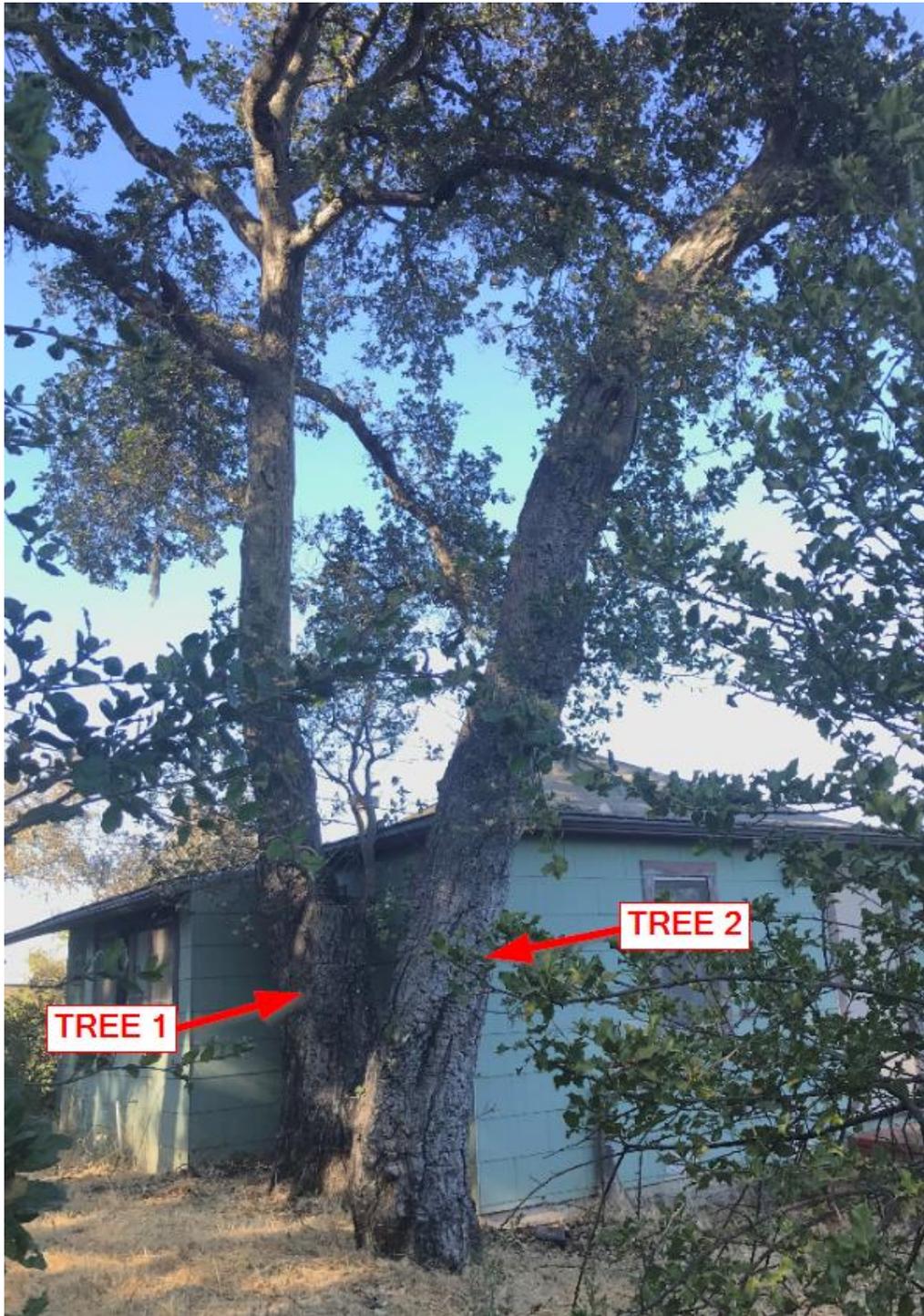


Figure 2.



Figure 3. (Upper left) Proximity of the trunk of Tree-1 to the existing house. (Upper right) Proximity of the lower trunk to the existing foundation (hammer for scale). (Below) Hammer laid near the foundation crack.



**Figure 4. View into the canopy of Tree-2. Red arrow indicates the location of a cavity in the trunk.**

## **Glossary**

**Health** – overall health or ability of the plant to deal with stress (vitality). Health assessment is based on the appearance of foliage, incremental growth, and the amount of living vascular tissue.

**Form** – The plant's overall appearance as it relates to its shape or silhouette. Can be negatively affected by crown asymmetries.

**Structure** – Overall stability of the tree or its branches. This can be negatively affected by things such as acute angle crotches, decay cavities, strong leans, stem girdling roots, ambrosia beetles, history of failures, etc.

## **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. Defects may be obscured by soil, brush, vines, aerial foliage, branches, multiple trunks or other trees. Even structurally sound, healthy trees are wind thrown during severe storms or other weather events. Consequently, a conclusion that a tree does not require corrective surgery or removal is not a guarantee of no risk, hazard, or sound health.

**Table 1. Tree Condition Ratings**

Rating category	Condition components		
	Health	Structure	Form
Excellent	High vigor and nearly perfect health with little or no twig dieback, discoloration, or defoliation	Nearly ideal and free of defects.	Nearly ideal for the species. Generally symmetric. Consistent with the intended use.
Good	Vigor is normal for the species. No significant damage due to diseases or pests. Any twig dieback, defoliation, or discoloration is minor.	Well-developed structure. Defects are minor and can be corrected.	Minor asymmetries/deviations from species norm. Mostly consistent with the intended use. Function and aesthetics are not compromised.
Fair	Reduced vigor. Damage due to insects or diseases may be significant and associated with defoliation but is not likely to be fatal. Twig dieback, defoliation, discoloration, and/or dead branches may comprise up to 50% of the crown.	A single defect of a significant nature or multiple moderate defects. Defects are not practical to correct or would require multiple treatments over several years.	Major asymmetries/deviations from species norm and/or intended use. Function and/or aesthetics are compromised.
Poor	Unhealthy and declining in appearance. Poor vigor. Low foliage density and poor foliage color are present. Potentially fatal pest infestation. Extensive twig and/or branch dieback.	A single serious defect or multiple significant defects. Recent change in tree orientation. Observed structural problems cannot be corrected. Failure may occur at any time.	Largely asymmetric/abnormal. Detracts from intended use and/or aesthetics to a significant degree.
Very poor	Poor vigor. Appears to be dying and in the last stages of life. Little live foliage.	Single or multiple severe defects. Failure is probable or imminent.	Visually unappealing. Provides little or no function in the landscape.
Dead			