

TOWN OF HILLSBOROUGH

SAN MATEO COUNTY

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1600 Floribunda Ave.
Hillsborough
California, 94010

Tree Removal Guidelines

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“Tree” is defined as *“Any woody plant which has a trunk with a diameter of twelve inches (12”) or greater, measured at four feet, six inches (4’-6”) above natural grade”*.

I. Tree Removal Which Is Related to Property Improvements

(in other words, if any site or construction work, including landscaping, is also proposed on the property)

All tree removals related to the construction of property improvements, along with the plans for property improvements, require design review & approval from the Planning Department (by ADRB or Administratively). Once approved, a permit must be obtained from the Building Department.

II. Tree Removal Which Is Not Related to Property Improvements

(if no additional site or construction work is proposed on the property)

A. On lots which have improvements (such as a house): Design review approval (by the ADRB or Administratively), and a tree removal permit (issued by the Building Department), is required when removing a tree on a lot which contains a structure or other improvements and:

1. The trunk is 36” or greater in diameter (circumference 113” or greater), measured at 4’-6” above natural grade; or,
 2. The open-market valuation of the project involving the tree removal exceeds \$5,000.00
- Applications for the required design review are available in the Planning Department.

B. On Vacant Lots: A tree removal permit, issued by the Building Official (or designated representative), is required when the tree is located on a vacant lot, regardless of the cost of the removal. Submit the following: A site plan showing the location, species, size of the tree(s); an arborist report; a letter indicating why removal is requested, and a proposal for replanting and maintenance. The fee is based on valuation, with a minimum fee of \$100; however, additional fees may be required if the Town’s consulting arborist is required, or if a public notice must be prepared (depending on the scope and nature of the proposed removal).

III. Immediate Hazards

There is an expedited process if the tree to be removed is an immediate hazard:

A. The applicant shall submit to the Building/Planning Department:

1. A simple site plan showing the location, species, size of the tree (relative to property lines, the house, neighboring properties, the street, etc.);
2. An arborist report indicating that the tree represents an **immediate hazard, photos of the tree and a recommendation for replacement;**
3. The species and size of the replacement tree/s (California native species are encouraged as replacement trees, but other varieties may be approved if recommended by a Certified Arborist or Landscape Architect); and,
4. The fee for this review is based on the valuation of the work to be completed and will be assessed by the Building Division upon permit application submittal. Additional fees may be required if the Town’s consulting arborist is required.
5. If more than four trees are proposed to be removed (5 trees constitutes a grove of trees*), the arborist report shall include an analysis of the impacts the tree removal will have on neighboring properties.

B. If the emergency tree removal is granted, the applicant (or tree removal company) shall secure a permit from the Building Department for the tree removal and replacement. Fees are based on valuation and a final inspection is required once all work is completed.

- The removal of Blue Gum Eucalyptus and Baileyana Acacia trees is encouraged.
- The Hillsborough Municipal Code does not provide regulations or standards for issues between neighbors regarding the trimming of branches of trees that may be overhanging a common property line. Such issues must be resolved between the involved property owners.

* Per HMC Section 14.04.020, a Grove is defined as *“a group of at least five (5) woody plants of the same type with a diameter of six inches or more, measured at four feet, six inches above natural grade”*.