

Urban Forestry Council Landmark Tree Committee Report

Submitted by Landmark Tree Committee Chair, Jon Swae on October 23, 2018

Committee members present at the October 15, 2018 Landmark Tree Ad Hoc Committee meeting:

Malcolm Hillan, Carla Short, Damon Spigelman, Michael Sullivan, and Jon Swae

Street address: 2694 McAllister Street

Common name: California buckeye

Scientific name: *Aesculus californica*

Summary:

The Landmark Tree Committee recommends that the Urban Forestry Council support the nomination of this tree for Landmark Tree Status. The nomination was supported by a Committee vote of 5-0. The Committee supported this nomination based on the tree's rarity, physical attributes, and environmental benefits. The report below summarizes the Committee's discussion and criteria used in its decision.

Rarity

The Committee found the California buckeye specimen to be uncommon because of its large size and prominent location in a front yard. The Committee noted that while the species itself is not exactly rare, it is very rare to find such a large and visually striking specimen of this California native species in a highly visible urban street setting.

Physical Attributes

The tree is a significantly prominent landscape feature in the neighborhood that is clearly visible from multiple locations on both McAllister Street and North Willard Street. The Committee agreed that this tree, with its large trunk and expansive canopy, may perhaps be the largest California buckeye in the city of San Francisco. While the tree's exact age is unknown, the tree appears to be of significant age. It may likely have been planted around the time the house was built in 1900. The canopy is large and well-shaped with striking seasonal displays of green leaves and cone-like flowers. Some Committee members shared observations on the tree's structure such as included bark, lateral cracks in at least one branch, and the presence of rot from previous pruning wounds.

Historical

The tree grows in front of an old farmhouse built in 1900. The Historic Preservation Commission representative present at the meeting indicated that the house itself would likely be eligible for "historic resource" designation. The house has a unique architectural style unlike other buildings in the area. The Committee discussed the possibility that this California buckeye and the bay tree on the same property may be remnant plantings from when this area was farm land. The tree's setting, age and nearby home give a strong feeling of pre-urban San Francisco's pastoral history.

Environmental

Being a California native species, the tree provides habitat and sustenance to a variety of native bees and butterflies. It grows closely to another native tree, a large California bay (*Umbellularia californica*)

on the same property. This proximity is likely to create a larger area of habitat for many native species. At least one Committee member observed wildlife present in the tree at the time of site visit.

Cultural

The tree is featured in several publications, including Michael Sullivan's book *The Trees of San Francisco*, where it is highlighted as a significant tree in San Francisco and part of a walking tour. The tree is also featured and recognized by local native plant and habitat restoration community organizations in online materials (Sutro Stewards and Yerba Buena Chapter of the California Native Plant Society). Committee members discussed how a construction proposal in the 1990s spurred a large neighborhood outpouring of support to save this California buckeye. The construction did not proceed and a tree protection easement was put into place that is still in effect today.