

TO: City Council
FROM: Lisa Parks, City Administrator
DATE: May 14, 2024
SUBJECT: Davis Meeker Garry Oak Tree Update

1) Recommended Action:

No action is necessary, this will be an update on the issues associated with the Davis Meeker Garry Oak tree.

2) Background:

The David Meeker Garry oak tree has been a fixture in the community for at least 400 years and is a treasured landmark with many stories to tell. In the spring of 2023, an 18-inch diameter branch fell from about 50 above the ground, landing partially in the south bound lane of Old Highway 99. This is a busy arterial street that carries an average of approximately 20,000 cars every day.

Fortunately, no one was harmed by the branch when it fell. However, because of the amount of decay in the failed branch, as well as the numerous structures, vehicles and people that move near and under the tree, the decision was made to have a detailed risk assessment completed.

The City's contract tree professional, Kevin McFarland, performed the assessment, which included additional evaluations by a climbing arborist who assessed the upper canopy and by a sonic tomography specialist. All three professionals are ISA Certified Arborists Tree Risk Assessment Qualified. The resulting report was further reviewed by another ISA Certified Master Arborist Tree Risk Assessment Qualified Municipal Specialist from the City of Olympia, providing a third-party review of both the methodology used and the recommendations contained in the report.

Because the Davis Meeker Garry oak tree is listed on the City of Tumwater Historic Register, the City's Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) was asked to consider delisting the tree from the register. The HPC considered the request to delist the tree at their public meetings held on March 21, 2024 and April 18, 2024. At these meetings, the HPC accepted public comment, a presentation from City staff was provided at the March meeting, and Mr. McFarland was present at both meetings to provide answers and clarifications regarding his report. After considering all of the information presented to them, at the April 18, 2024 meeting, the HPC voted to recommend the Davis Meeker Garry oak tree remain on the City's Historic Register.

A discussion of the next steps related to the Davis Meeker Garry oak tree will be presented at the City Council Work Session.

3) Alternatives:

No action is proposed for this item, it is informational only.