March, 7th 2025

From: Will Fargo ISA Certified Arborist PN-9313A willfargo@gmail.com 503-881-6004

ATTN: City of Salem



## RE: 5407 Terra Cotta Dr. SE Salem, OR 97306

To Whom it May Concern,

I have been contracted by Altar Tree Service LLC to perform a basic tree risk assessment of three (3) Douglas Fir (*Pseudotsuga menziesii*) trees at 5407 SE Terra Cotta Dr. SE Salem, OR 97306. For the sake of this report, *Tree 1* refers to the 40" DBH tree located immediately on the west side of the house. *Tree 2* (33" DBH) and *Tree 3* (31" DBH) are at the Northeast corner of the house, with Tree 2 being the closer of the two to the house. On March 6th at approximately 12:00pm, I conducted a basic, level two tree risk assessment of these three trees in accordance with established ISA tree risk assessment criteria and standards. The associated ISA Tree Risk Assessment Forms and documenting photos are attached to this report.

The main concern for all three of these trees is the same. Upon inspection of all three trees it was noted that the tree bark is actively sloughing away from the trunks of all three trees. Upon closely inspecting intact and sloughing bark, large insect galleries were present throughout the entire bark portion of at least the lower twenty feet (20') of all three trees. Large colonies of what appeared to be velvety tree ants (black head, black thorax and red abdomen) were observed inhabiting these galleries. From my research and experience, these insects are rarely able to inhabit healthy trees and should be viewed as an opportunistic indicator organism. While there were no signs of termites or fir boring beetles, there is no doubt that significant internal decay is present in all three of these trees, allowing ant colonies of this size to freely proliferate. Unlike carpenter ants, these ants typically require wet, soft wood to create ant galleries and inhabit dead and dying trees. All three trees have had their canopies raised (Tree 1 to an unreasonable extent, likely in 2017), but the cause of decay in these three trees is somewhat difficult to pinpoint. It is possible that construction activities in 2017 damaged the trees (specifically the roots) to an extent that another pathogen such as laminated root rot or phytophthora could take hold. Pathogens of this type can be difficult to detect prior to failure. Another possible vector for decay is the evidence of fire damage to these trees in the past (likely five to fifteen years prior). Slight signs of bark charring were observed adjacent to the house on Tree 1. Additionally, the upper trunk of Tree 2 and

Tree 3 are covered with small epicormic branches. This is a common stress response to fir that occurs in Duglas fir trees as a result of fire. All of these signs point to a fire five to fifteen years ago that may have created a vector for a wood decaying organism. Regardless, the entire bark structure of the lower portions of these trees has been destroyed and continued internal decay is unavoidable. In my opinion, these trees represent a considerable risk to the adjacent house and neighborhood.

In performing formal tree risk assessment, the likelihood of failure was determined to be **probable**, though a strong argument could be made for a ranking of imminent. The likelihood of house impact upon failure for all three trees was determined to be **high**. The house is currently for sale, so occupancy was difficult to quantify, but the consequences of failure were determined to be **significant**, leading to a tree risk rating of **High** for all three trees. Given that there are no reasonable mitigation options and my recommendation is immediate removal of this tree.

Sincerely,

Will Fargo

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