

Project name:
Birdwood Renovation

Project ref:
60563560

From:
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Date:
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To:
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CC:

Memo

Subject: Birdwood Landscape Preservation

The preservation of the Birdwood historic landscape has been an important consideration during the planning for the property rehabilitation. Treatment planning has focused on the retention of key historic spaces, qualities, and features, including views, vegetation, garden areas, and other landscape resources. The historic character and design of the landscape has guided the placement of proposed features and the general arrangement of site circulation and spatial organization.

Particular questions about the treatment for proposed site features have focused on two issues: the protection of special mature trees and the location of event-related structures.

- In general, proposed site features are placed outside the dripline of mature trees to minimize damage to their roots. In one case, the plan proposes a new service access drive along the western side of the property's historic core; this access abuts a row of historic pecan trees. Pecans typically grow a very deep tap root with shallower feeder roots out to their dripline or beyond. The current plan proposes that the new service access would follow what appears to be an older road or path trace, visible in the landscape through a slight depression in the topography immediately west of the trees. An older aerial photograph, c. 1937, also appears to show the end point of that same drive, parallel to the eastern driveway that remains today. Therefore, the trees likely matured under conditions that included a road or path in the proposed service access location. The design team will evaluate options for protecting the pecan trees while rehabilitating the service drive by 1) working with an arborist to evaluate potential protection measures, 2) providing a shallow road base that minimizes impacts to the trees' feeder roots, 3) shifting the proposed drive to the west outside the trees' dripline, and/or 4) other measures as necessary. Views to the service drive from the key historic spaces (house and formal gardens) would be mitigated by proposed plantings such as a hedge and other compatible screening vegetation.
- The landscape's historic spatial organization suggests that any structures should be located outside the key garden areas and critical viewsheds. However, temporary structures placed in the landscape to support events would not have an impact on the integrity of the property because they would be removed at the closure of the event season and would have no permanent effect on the landscape (i.e., would not require the removal of existing landscape features or the addition of visible permanent surface features such as a foundation). While the exact location of any future permanent structure would be evaluated in more detail as necessary, the general location would follow the treatment guidelines for the overall property.