

STAFF REPORT

DATE: April 26, 2023

RE: **521 Margaret Street (permit application # T2023-0132)**

FROM: Karen DeMaria, City of Key West Urban Forestry Manager

An application was received requesting the removal of **(1) Spanish Lime tree**. A site inspection was done and documented the following:

Tree Species: Spanish Lime (*Melicoccus bijugatus*)



Photo showing location of tree.



Photo of whole tree, view 1.



Photo of trunks and canopy, view 1. Note large, old tear area (large limb broke off from this area) .



Close up photo of old tear area in main trunks, view 1.



Photo of whole tree, view 2.



Photo of
tree canopy,
view 1.



Photo of
trunks and
canopy,
view 2.



Photo of whole tree, view 3.



Photo of
tree
trunks.



Photo of
tree
canopy,
view 2.



Photo of trunks and canopy, view 3.



Close up photo of old tear area in main trunks, view 2.



Two close up photos showing decay in old tear area.





Close up
photo of
decay in old
tear area.



Photo of
decay and
trunk
cracking
below old
tear area.

Diameter: 57.3"

Location: 80% (growing in middle of yard area-very visible canopy tree)

Species: 100% (on protected tree list)

Condition: 30% (overall condition is poor. Half of tree has major decay and active termites)

Total Average Value = 70%

Value x Diameter = 40.1 replacement caliper inches

Note: property owner submitted photos and videos with application showing major decay and active termites in main old tear area.

Additional Information

May 2, 2023

Key West Tree Commission
City of Key West Planning Dept
1300 White Street
Key West, FL 33040

RE: 521 Margaret St – Decaying, Dangerous Tree

Dear Key West Tree Commission Members:

I own the historic cottages 515 Margaret and 517 Margaret, which are one parcel with a common deck and entrance. 517 Margaret is alarmingly close to a very massive, decaying and termite-infested tree located at the adjacent parcel 521 Margaret. The tree has been decaying for years and now is a danger to my property, my vehicles, myself, guests, and service providers, as well as the other neighbors of 521 Margaret, most of whom are elderly, and their properties, and to sidewalk pedestrians and street-parked vehicles.

I very much want to attend the next tree commission meeting on the 9th when this tree is on your agenda, but I'm unable to do so due to a work trip to Lehi, Utah on May 8-10. This letter is my submitted request that the Tree Commission allow the removal of this 90-foot decaying tree in the middle of a densely populated area.

I believe the tree at 521 is a Spanish Lime tree, but it's three trees that have grown together, resulting in no solid core trunk. It is about 90 feet tall and many of its branches span about 40 feet. Although many of these branches have leaves, there are visible cankers on many large branches and the tree is rotted at its core with a large termite nest and wood so decayed that it is soft like soil. The bark falls off in chunks, likely due to the termite damage. Limbs of various sizes fall off the tree unpredictably. The large 40-foot limb closest to my house has a visible canker, which is very concerning.

About five years ago a limb that was around 1-foot in diameter and 40-feet long dropped unexpectedly, falling across an active driveway, reaching Margaret Street. I constantly worry when another massive limb will fall, but this time on my house and the people inside it, especially during hurricane season. The large termite nest inside the tree is also of tremendous concern as the termite-infested trunk is about 25 feet from my 100% wood house.

As limbs continue to drop and the termite nest and decay continue to grow, the owner of 521 Margaret, Mr. Malouin, has taken care and expense to meet with three arborists in pursuit of a diagnosis. From what I understand, each of these arborists declared the tree to be unsafe with recommendations for its removal. Limbs will continue to fall, and even worse, there is a great risk that the three, fused trunks might split, resulting in one of the three tree trunks falling.

Thank you for your attention to this serious matter. Homes in Key West are tightly knit, and this tree is a great threat to my house and anyone on my property. Please let me know if you require additional information or have questions.

Sincerely,
Shelley Robinson