

Public Works Order No.: 201797



London N. Breed
Mayor

Mohammed Nuru
Director

San Francisco Public Works
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The Director of Public Works held a Public Hearing on Monday, April 29th, 2019 commencing at 5:30 p.m. at City Hall, Room 416, 1 Dr. Carlton B. Goodlett Place, San Francisco, CA 94102. The hearing was to consider Order No. 200996, the removal of thirty-nine (39) street trees (Ficus) with replacement (unless otherwise noted) adjacent to the listed locations in Hayes Valley.

Findings:

Staff with the Bureau of Urban Forestry (BUF) provided background information about why the Department has initiated the removal of thirty-nine (39) street trees with replacement along Octavia and Hayes Streets in Hayes Valley. The Department approved the removal of the street trees and the public protested.

Background and timeline

- The Bureau of Urban Forestry (BUF) proactively reached out to the Hayes Valley Neighborhood Association when the Department became aware that an upcoming key map (No. 25) contained many ficus trees with very poor structure and that removal of a large number of trees was likely;
 - BUF Public Information Officer, Nancy Sarieh, presented information to the HVNA at their January 7th, 2019 meeting. This was a main item listed on the agenda about the Department's concerns about Ficus trees, and specifically, within Hayes Valley;
 - January/February, 2019, BUF staff began providing updates and answering questions for both the Mayor's Office and the office of Supervisor Valle Brown to keep everyone informed about next steps and the anticipated public notification and hearing process;
 - BUF scheduled two on-site walks, in February, to review as many of the ficus trees with the public, that have been proposed for removal;
 - Both of these meetings were well attended, and many of the trees proposed for removal were reviewed, with the specific structural deficiencies for each tree noted on site;
 - Partnered with Friends of the Urban Forest to plant empty/missing tree locations on June 11th;
 - Attended HVNA meeting on 6/27/2019, to provide updates by both BUF and FUF recent efforts to plant trees and secure additional funding for planting;

If trees can be pruned to mitigate public safety concerns and reduce the likelihood of failure, that is always the first option that is considered, during the tree by tree evaluation process.

In November, 2014 the Department issued Director's Order No. 183151, "Tree Removal Criteria for Ficus Trees" which outlined both the benefits that large, mature trees provide in San Francisco, but also that the City has experienced an increased amount of ficus tree failures, City-wide, and that the threshold for removal of ficus trees would be lowered if specific structural deficiencies existed, on a tree-by-tree evaluation.

Proposition E passed on November 8, 2016, which made it the City's responsibility to maintain all of the street trees in San Francisco. Street Tree SF is the program now in place, run by San Francisco Public Works, Bureau of Urban Forestry, to implement Proposition E. The goal is that each street tree in San Francisco is evaluated and maintained on a three to five year maintenance cycle. The trees under review were identified during routine evaluation of the street trees within Key Map 25.

Prior to the tree hearing on April 29th, Urban Forestry staff attended the January 7th, Hayes Valley Neighborhood Association meeting, and also organized two site walks to review the trees proposed for removal with the community.

A primary goal of the site walks was to explain the concerns that the Department has with ficus trees, which is that large stems with narrow angles of attachment (codominant), with or without included bark, have been splitting apart across the City. During the site walks, the particular structure of each tree was reviewed in great detail by the Urban Forester, Chris Buck.

During the site walks, there was lively dialogue and community members attending the walks voiced many concerns about the proposed tree removals. The tree lined streets in Hayes Valley help define its character and a large number of empty tree basins (missing trees) have remained unplanted for many years. The community members in attendance asked if any trees could remain, even if they were pruned more aggressively than in the past, to reduce the impact of losing so many trees.

Prior to the April 29th, 2019 Tree Hearing, the Department proposed the removal of the following thirty-nine (39) street trees (28 Ficus, 1 poplar) with replacement (unless otherwise noted) adjacent to the locations listed below.

The following locations on Octavia Street:

508 Octavia: 6 ficus; 534 Octavia: 2 ficus; 550-560 Octavia: 5 ficus; 600 Octavia: 3 ficus; 630 Octavia: 1 ficus; 636 Octavia: 1 ficus; 666 Octavia: 2 ficus; "601" Octavia: 2 ficus; 523 Octavia: 1 ficus; 515 Octavia: 1 ficus; 501 Octavia: 1 poplar tree;

The following locations on Hayes Street:

412 Hayes: 3 ficus (not replantable – bus zone); 430 Hayes: 1 ficus; 520 Hayes: 3 ficus (only middle tree replantable – multiple conflicts); 568 Hayes: 1 ficus;

The following locations on Grove Street:

"499" Grove: 2 ficus; 501 Grove: 1 ficus; 530 Grove: 1 ficus;

The following locations on Ivy Street:

380 Ivy: 1 ficus (not replantable); 426 Ivy: 1 ficus (not replantable);

April 29th Tree Hearing

At the April 29th Tree Hearing, Urban Forestry staff stated that based on strong opposition to the removals expressed at both community site walks, Urban Forestry staff reviewed the 39 trees proposed for removal to see if aggressive, experimental pruning would allow more trees to remain during this next 3 to 5 year pruning cycle.

Based on this review, Urban Forestry staff identified eleven (11) street trees among those listed above, that they believe can be monitored for the next three years, if the trees are pruned in a more aggressive manner.

At the hearing, Urban Forestry staff reviewed the twenty-eight (28) trees still proposed for removal showing multiple photos of each tree and noting the structural deficiencies present within each tree which makes them more prone to stem failures.

List of the eleven (11) trees to be retained and receive experimental, aggressive pruning.
Other neighboring trees listed for reference

Address/location	Tree #/site	Revised recommendation	
412 Hayes St.	Tree 1	Retain tree/prune	
412 Hayes St.	Tree 2	Retain tree/prune	
412 Hayes St.	Tree 3	Retain tree/prune	
Octavia (Hayes to Ivy) East Side	508 Octavia	Tree 1	Retain/prune
508 Octavia	Tree 2	Retain/prune	
508 Octavia	Tree 3	Remove tree/replace	
508 Octavia	Tree 4	Retain/prune	
508 Octavia	Tree 5	Remove/replace	
508 Octavia	Tree 6	Remove/replace	
Octavia (Ivy to Grove) East Side	534 Octavia	Tree 1	Remove/replace
534 Octavia	Tree 2	Remove/replace	
550-560 Octavia	Tree 1	Remove/replace	
550-560 Octavia	Tree 2	Retain/prune	
550-560 Octavia	Tree 3	Remove/replace	
550-560 Octavia	Tree 4	Retain/prune	
550-560 Octavia	Tree 5	Retain/prune	
600 Octavia (Grove to Fulton)	600 Octavia	Tree 1	Remove/replace
600 Octavia	Tree 2	Remove/replace	
600 Octavia	Tree 3	Retain/prune	
630 Octavia	Tree 1/1	Retain/prune	

Tree numbering: trees are numbered with the flow of auto traffic on that side of the street.

The Department will commit to replanting the required replacement trees within three (3) months after both the trees and stumps have been removed by the contractor.

This includes: stump removal, sidewalk repair, shifting tree basins/cutting basins, purchasing trees/planting.

On May 22nd, 2019 one of the ficus trees proposed for removal adjacent to 666 Octavia St. experienced a large stem failure and the remaining sections of the tree had to be removed as an immediate public safety concern. This stem failure occurred despite the fact that the tree is much smaller than many of the other trees being considered for removal.

Concerns were raised whether the proposed tree removals had received CEQA clearance. Removal of hazardous and dying trees was considered in the Categorical Exemption granted in the 2014 Urban Forest Plan, (case no 2013.1517E) which also analyzed the cumulative impacts associated with the plan.

Recommendation:

After consideration of correspondence and testimony provided at the hearing, the decision is to approve the removal of twenty-eight (28) street trees listed below, with replacement, unless otherwise noted due to utility conflicts and tree spacing requirements. The replacement trees and necessary sidewalk repairs shall be completed within three months after the removal of the trees and stumps have occurred.

The following trees are approved for removal adjacent to Octavia Street:

508 Octavia: Tree 3, 5, 6; **534** Octavia: 2 ficus; **550-560** Octavia: Trees 1 & 3; **600 Octavia:** Trees 1 & 2; **636 Octavia:** 1 ficus; **666** Octavia: Tree 2 (Tree 1 failed/removed); **“601”** Octavia: 2 ficus; **523** Octavia: 1 ficus; **515** Octavia: 1 ficus; **501** Octavia: 1 poplar tree;

The following trees are approved for removal adjacent to Hayes Street:

430 Hayes: 1 ficus; **520** Hayes: 3 ficus (only middle tree replantable – multiple conflicts); **568** Hayes: 1 ficus;

The following trees are approved for removal adjacent to Grove Street:

“499” Grove: 2 ficus; **501** Grove: 1 ficus; **530** Grove: 1 ficus;

The following trees are approved for removal adjacent to Ivy Street:

380 Ivy: 1 ficus (not replantable); **426** Ivy: 1 ficus (not replantable);

Please contact Urban Forestry Staff if you need further clarification on which tree(s) are proposed to be removed and/or pruned. (415) 554-6700 / urbanforestry@sfdpw.org

Appeal:

This order may be appealed to the Board of Appeals within 15 days of August 28th, 2019.

Board of Appeals

1650 Mission, Room 304

San Francisco, CA 94103 (between Van Ness and Duboce Avenues)

Phone: 415.575.6880 Fax: 415.575.6885

Regular office hours of the Board of Appeals are Monday through Friday from 8am to 5pm. Appointments may be made for filing an appeal by calling 415-575-6880. All appeals must be filed in person. For additional information on the San Francisco Board of Appeals and to view the Appeal Process Overview, please visit their website at <http://sfgov.org/bdappeal/>

X

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Julia Dawson

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Acting Director