

1 [Public Works, Administrative, Planning Codes - Street Trees]

2
3 **Ordinance amending the Public Works Code to allow development projects to satisfy**
4 **street tree planting requirements through payment of an in lieu fee or providing**
5 **alternative landscaping; exempt accessory dwelling units from street tree planting**
6 **requirements; eliminate appeals to the Board of Appeals for tree removals undertaken**
7 **by City departments and commissions; and update in lieu fee reporting requirements;**
8 **amending the Administrative Code to create a separate account within the Adopt-A-**
9 **Tree Fund to receive in lieu fees for street tree requirements; amending the Planning**
10 **Code to update street tree applicability requirements; affirming the Planning**
11 **Department's determination under the California Environmental Quality Act; making**
12 **findings of consistency with the General Plan, and the eight priority policies of**
13 **Planning Code, Section 101.1; and making public necessity, convenience, and welfare**
14 **findings under Planning Code, Section 302.**

15 NOTE: **Unchanged Code text and uncodified text** are in plain Arial font.
16 **Additions to Codes** are in *single-underline italics Times New Roman font*.
17 **Deletions to Codes** are in *strikethrough italics Times New Roman font*.
18 **Board amendment additions** are in double-underlined Arial font.
19 **Board amendment deletions** are in ~~strikethrough Arial font~~.
20 **Asterisks (* * * *)** indicate the omission of unchanged Code
21 subsections or parts of tables.

22 Be it ordained by the People of the City and County of San Francisco:

23 Section 1. Environmental and Land Use Findings.

24 (a) The Planning Department has determined that the actions contemplated in this
25 ordinance comply with the California Environmental Quality Act (California Public Resources
Code Sections 21000 et seq.). Said determination is on file with the Clerk of the Board of

1 Supervisors in File No. 251211 and is incorporated herein by reference. The Board affirms
2 this determination.

3 (b) On _____, the Planning Commission, in Resolution No. _____,
4 adopted findings that the actions contemplated in this ordinance are consistent, on balance,
5 with the City's General Plan and eight priority policies of Planning Code, Section 101.1. The
6 Board adopts these findings as its own. A copy of said Resolution is on file with the Clerk of
7 the Board of Supervisors in File No. _____, and is incorporated herein by reference.

8 (c) Pursuant to Planning Code, Section 302, this Board finds that this ordinance will
9 serve the public necessity, convenience, and welfare for the reasons set forth in Planning
10 Commission Resolution No. _____, and incorporates such reasons by this reference
11 thereto. A copy of said resolution is on file with the Clerk of the Board of Supervisors in File
12 No. _____.

13

14 Section 2. Background and Findings.

15 (a) San Francisco's urban forest creates a more walkable, livable, and sustainable city.
16 Trees and other vegetation clean the air and water, create greener neighborhoods, calm
17 traffic, improve public health, provide wildlife habitat, and absorb greenhouse gases.
18 Annually, the benefits provided by trees in San Francisco are estimated at over \$100 million.
19 However, with just over 125,000 trees, San Francisco's tree canopy—measured by the
20 amount of land covered by trees when viewed from above—is just 13.7%, one of the smallest
21 of any major city in the United States.

22 (b) Article 16 of the Public Works Code—the Urban Forestry Ordinance—seeks to “[t]o
23 promote efficient, cost effective management of the City's urban forest by coordinating public
24 and private efforts within a comprehensive and professional management system.” Private
25 parties planting and maintaining new street trees is a key strategy of the 2014 Urban Forestry

1 Plan, on file with the Clerk of the Board of Supervisors in File No. 141264, and the 2010
2 Better Streets Plan, on file with the Clerk of the Board of Supervisors in File No. 101194.
3 Similarly, the 2021 Citywide Infrastructure Nexus Study, on file with the Clerk of the Board of
4 Supervisors in File No. 251211, found that street tree planting is an element of San
5 Francisco’s sustainable streets infrastructure. To this end, since 2010, the Public Works
6 Code (previously the Planning Code) has required development applicants to plant one street
7 tree for every 20 feet of lot frontage.

8 (c) Alternatives to street tree planting, which include payment of an in lieu fee or
9 provision of alternative sidewalk landscaping, are limited to situations where the Director of
10 Public Works determines that planting a street tree in the required fashion is impossible,
11 impractical, and/or unsafe. The Public Works Code sets the in lieu fee in an amount equal to
12 the Department's cost to plant and water a tree for three years—the period necessary to
13 establish a street tree. The current in lieu fee amount is \$2,590, subject to annual inflation
14 adjustments. In lieu fees are deposited into the Adopt-A-Tree Fund, proceeds of which are
15 used to fund the Department’s planting and maintenance of new street trees.

16 (d) This ordinance enables a development applicant to satisfy the street tree planting
17 requirements through payment of an in lieu fee. In situations where planting the street tree
18 would be impossible, impracticable, and/or unsafe, this ordinance would allow a development
19 application to satisfy the street tree planting requirement by planting alternative sidewalk
20 landscaping, as defined in the ordinance. This ordinance also exempts Accessory Dwelling
21 Units and Junior Accessory Dwelling Units (“ADU/JADU”) from the street tree requirements.
22 By expanding the in lieu fee option to all development applicants, defining appropriate street
23 tree planting requirements, and exempting ADU/JADUs, this ordinance promotes efficiency
24 and certainty in the development process, one of the key goals of the Permit SF initiative.

25 (e) This ordinance does not establish, increase, or impose a fee within the meaning of

1 Government Code Section 66001(a). The in lieu fee remains equal to the Department's cost
2 of planting and watering a street tree for three years, which bears a reasonable relationship to
3 the impact of the foregone street tree.

4 (f) In situations where a street tree poses a safety hazard, this ordinance eliminates
5 the ability for a member of the public to appeal such a removal and thereby delay the removal
6 of the hazard. This ordinance also provides that the decision of the Director of Public Works
7 is final and nonappealable for a removal of a non-hazardous street tree by any City
8 department or commission.

9
10 Section 3. Article 16 of the Public Works Code is hereby amended by revising
11 Sections 802, 806, and 807, to read as follows:

12
13 **SEC. 802. DEFINITIONS.**

14 * * * *

15 "In-lieu fee" shall mean a fee imposed and deposited into the Adopt-A-Tree Fund ~~and~~
16 ~~imposed by the Director pursuant to Section 806. The in-lieu fee shall be equal to the replacement~~
17 ~~value of a tree(s) to be removed or trees that have been destroyed or as otherwise specified in Section~~
18 ~~811. In the case of trees required to be planted by Section 805 or 806, yet excused by the Director~~
19 ~~through a waiver or modification, the In-lieu fee shall be equal to the City's cost to plant and water a~~
20 ~~tree for three years. The minimum In-lieu fee shall be \$1,489.00. Beginning with fiscal year 2007-2008,~~
21 ~~this fee shall be reviewed and adjusted each year in accordance with the procedures set forth in Public~~
22 ~~Works Code Section 2.1.2.~~

23 * * * *

24
25 **SEC. 806. PLANTING AND REMOVAL OF STREET TREES.**

1 (a) **Planting and Removal by the Department.**

2 (1) **Planting.** The Department may determine to plant a new climate
3 appropriate Tree(s) in a Sidewalk or public right-of-way. When the Department determines to
4 plant a new Street Tree(s), the Department will undertake Maintenance responsibility for such
5 new Street Tree and shall send a courtesy Notice to the abutting property owner prior to
6 Planting such new Tree. Any objections to the proposed work must be submitted to the
7 Director in writing and postmarked within 30 days after Notice by the Director. The Director
8 shall consider such objections and may hold a hearing, in the Director's discretion. The
9 Director's decision on the matter shall be final and nonappealable.

10 (2) **Removal of Street Trees.** The Department may not cut down or remove a
11 Street Tree, unless 30 days prior to the Removal date, the Department notifies all Interested
12 San Francisco organizations and, to the extent practical, all owners and occupants of
13 properties that are on or across from the block face where the affected Tree is located. In
14 addition, 30 days prior to the Removal date, the Department shall post a notice on the
15 affected Tree. *This subsection (a)(2) shall not apply to Removal of Hazard Trees.*

16 (3) **Appeal of Tree Removal.**

17 (A) If within 30 days after the giving of Notice for Street Tree Removal,
18 as specified in subsection (a)(2), ~~or if within 15 days after the giving of notice for Removal of a~~
19 ~~hazard Street Tree, as specified in Subsection (a)(4),~~ any Person files with the Department written
20 objections to the Removal, the Director shall hold a hearing to consider public testimony
21 concerning the proposed Tree Removal. Written Notice of the date, time, and place of the
22 hearing shall be posted on the affected Tree and the Department's website, provided in a
23 ~~newspaper of general circulation,~~ and sent to the objecting party, the owner of the property
24 abutting the affected Tree, and all Interested San Francisco organizations, not less than
25 seven days prior thereto.

1 (B) The Director shall issue a written decision and order on the
2 objections after the public hearing specified above.

3 (C) The Director’s decision shall be final and nonappealable ~~to the Board~~
4 ~~of Appeals~~.

5 (4) **Removal of Hazard Street Trees.**

6 (A) No Hazard Street Tree shall be cut down or removed by the
7 Department unless:

8 (i) The Department gives 15 days’ prior written Notice to the
9 owner of the property abutting the affected Tree; and

10 (ii) Fifteen days prior to the Removal date, the Department
11 notifies all Interested San Francisco organizations and, to the extent practical, owners and
12 occupants of properties that are on or across the block face where the affected Tree is
13 located. In addition, 15 days prior to the Removal date, the Department shall post a notice on
14 the affected Tree.

15 (B) The Department’s decision on Removal of a Hazard Street Tree shall be
16 final and nonappealable.

17 _____ (C) Hazard Street Tree shall have the same meaning as Hazard Tree in
18 Section 802 except that a Hazard Street Tree is located within the public right-of-way.

19 (5) **Emergency Removal.** In the case of manifest danger and immediate
20 necessity, as determined by the Director, the Department may remove any Street Tree
21 immediately. After such emergency Removal, the Department shall provide Notice of the
22 necessity for such action to the owner of the property abutting the affected Tree, all Interested
23 San Francisco organizations and, to the extent practical, all owners and occupants of
24 properties that are on or across from the block face where the affected Tree was removed.

25 * * * *

1 (c) **Planting and Removal by City Agencies, Commissions, or Other**

2 **Departments.** If a City agency, commission, or department other than the Department of
3 Public Works desires to plant or remove a Street Tree, such agency, commission, or
4 department shall be subject to the provisions of § subsection (b) of this Section 806; provided,
5 however, that for purposes of Street Tree Removal, the notice and procedures for Director's
6 hearings set forth in § subsections (a)(2) and (a)(3) shall apply. The Director's decision shall be
7 final and nonappealable.

8 (d) **Required Street Trees for Development Projects.** The Director shall require
9 Street Trees for the development projects as set forth in this § subsection (d).

10 (1) **Applicability.** This § subsection (d) shall apply to development projects that
11 involve any of the following except the construction of an Accessory Dwelling Unit and/or Junior
12 Accessory Dwelling Unit, as those terms are defined in Planning Code Section 102:

- 13 (A) the construction of a new building;
- 14 (B) the addition of a dwelling unit;
- 15 (C) the addition of a new curb-cut;
- 16 (D) the addition of a garage; and/or
- 17 (E) a net addition to an existing building of 500 gross square feet or

18 more.

19 (2) **Number of Trees Required.** The Director shall require one Street Tree for
20 each 20 feet of Street frontage of the property containing the development project, with any
21 remaining fraction of 10 feet or more of frontage requiring an additional Tree. Any existing
22 Street Trees located within the public right-of-way along such property that have been
23 protected during construction and that the Director does not recommend ~~ed~~ for Removal, shall
24 count toward meeting the requirement.

1 (3) **Standards for Required Trees.** New Street Trees that the Director
2 requires to be planted under this Subsection shall:

3 (A) be planted within the public right-of-way adjacent to the property
4 containing the development project;

5 (B) be of a species suitable for the site conditions;

6 (C) be a minimum of 24-inch box size;

7 (D) have a minimum 1 1/4-inch caliper, measured at 6-inches above
8 ground;

9 (E) be planted no higher than the adjacent Sidewalk and provide a
10 below-grade environment with nutrient-rich soils, free from overly-compacted soils, and
11 generally conducive to Tree root development; and

12 (F) be watered, maintained, and replaced if necessary by the property
13 owner, in accordance with this Article 16, and be in compliance with applicable water use
14 requirements of Administrative Code Chapter 63.

15 (4) **Alternatives to New Street Trees** ~~Waivers and Modifications. An applicant may~~
16 ~~satisfy some or all of the requirements of subsection (d)(2) The Director may waive or modify the~~
17 ~~number of and/or standards for Street Trees required pursuant to this Subsection only~~ as described
18 below:

19 (A) **In Lieu Fee.** ~~The Director, in his or her sole discretion, may waive or~~
20 ~~modify the requirements of this subsection when inadequate Sidewalk width or interference with~~
21 ~~driveways, sub-sidewalk basements, or other pre-existing surface, sub-surface, or above-grade features~~
22 ~~render installation of the required Street Tree(s) in the required fashion impossible, impractical, and/or~~
23 ~~unsafe. For each required Street Tree that the Director waives, the applicant, at his or her~~
24 ~~choosing, shall either (i) may elect to pay an In-lieu fee. The In lieu fee shall be equal to the City's~~
25 ~~cost to plant and water a tree for three years. The In-lieu fee shall be \$2,590 for Fiscal Year 2025-~~

1 2026. This fee shall be reviewed and adjusted each year as provided in Public Works Code Section
2 2.1.2. pursuant to Section 802 or (ii) to fulfill all or a portion of the requirement, provide alternative
3 landscaping, including but not limited to Sidewalk landscaping, in amount comparable to or greater
4 than the number of Street Trees waived; or

5 (B) Alternative Landscaping. Only in those extraordinary and unusual
6 circumstances where an applicant successfully demonstrates that an overriding City policy renders the
7 Planting of the required Street Tree(s) inappropriate and both the Director and the Director of
8 Planning concur, the Director may waive one or more required Street Trees. If the Director determines
9 that inadequate Sidewalk width or interference with driveways, sub-sidewalk basements, or other pre-
10 existing surface, sub-surface, or above-grade features render installation of the required Street Tree(s)
11 impossible, impractical, and/or unsafe, for each required Street Tree that the Director waives, the
12 Director, in his or her sole discretion, shall require that the applicant either may elect to (i) pay an In-
13 lieu fee pursuant to Section 802 or (ii) fulfill all or a portion of the requirement by providing
14 alternative landscaping that complies with all of the following; including but not limited to Sidewalk
15 landscaping, in amount comparable to or greater than the number of Street Trees waived.

- 16 (i) the water use requirements of Chapter 63 of the Administrative Code;
- 17 (ii) applicable provisions of Public Works Code Section 810B;
- 18 (iii) a minimum area of 75 square feet of sidewalk landscaping for each
19 required Street Tree that cannot be planted; and
- 20 (iv) applicable requirements in the Director's Order on Tree Planting
21 (Director's Order No. 187,246) and any successor order.

22 (5) Administration of the In Lieu Fee.

23 (A) Deposit. The In lieu fees collected pursuant to subsection (d)(4) shall be
24 deposited into a separate account within the Adopt-A-Tree fund under Section 10.100-227 of the

1 described in Planning Code Section 410, the Director and the Controller shall jointly prepare and
2 publish a comprehensive report on the compliance of the In lieu fee set forth in this Section 806 with
3 the California Mitigation Fee Act, Government Code Section 66001 et seq., including making specific
4 findings regarding any unexpended funds.

5
6 **SEC. 807. DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS URBAN FORESTRY PROGRAM;**
7 **POWERS AND DUTIES.**

8 * * * *

9 (d) **Authority over Site Development Plans.**

10 (1) The Department shall have the authority to review and comment on site
11 development plan applications received by the City's Central Permit Bureau that pertain to the
12 planting, alteration, or removal of street trees. The Department shall also have the authority to
13 review and comment on site development plan applications that pertain to the alteration or
14 removal of landmark trees designated pursuant to Section 810(a) of this Article 16 and
15 significant trees pursuant to Section 810A of this Article. Protection of such trees during
16 construction shall be required in accordance with Section 808(c) of this Article. Removal of
17 such trees shall be subject to the applicable rules and procedures for removal set forth in
18 Sections 806, 810, or 810A of this Article.

19 (2) The Department shall transmit annually the amount of the In lieu fee in Section
20 806(d)(4) to the Planning Department for inclusion on the Development Impact Fee Register. ~~If the~~
21 Director modifies or waives the requirements of Section 806(d) in accordance with subsection
22 806(d)(4), the Department shall impose an in-lieu fee on the property owner so excused.

23 (3) If an applicant elects to provide alternative landscaping pursuant to Section
24 806(d)(4)(B), the Department shall determine whether the proposed alternative landscaping complies
25 with the required standards.

1 (e) **Public Works Adopt-A-Tree Fund.** Pursuant to Section 10.100-227 of the
2 Administrative Code, the Department shall maintain the Public Works Adopt-A-Tree Fund to
3 enhance the urban forestry program.

4 (f) ~~*In-Lieu Tree*~~ **Planting Program.** The Department shall develop and implement an
5 ~~*In-Lieu Tree*~~ Planting Program to offset the loss of street trees, significant trees, and landmark
6 trees due to removal, destruction, or death. *The Tree Planting Program shall be funded through:*
7 *(1) fees or penalties assessed pursuant to Section 811 as mitigation for violation of the requirements in*
8 *this Article 16; (2) In lieu fees paid pursuant to Section 806; and (3) funds from the Tree Adoption*
9 *Program described in subsection (g).* The ~~*In-Lieu Tree*~~ Planting Program also shall compensate for
10 ~~*the loss of Street Trees*~~ required to be planted by Section 806(d) *for which the applicant has*
11 *elected to pay an In lieu fee. The Department shall use funds from In lieu fees to plant and water trees*
12 *for three years. , unless the Director has modified or waived such requirements under subsection*
13 *806(d)(4). The Department shall impose an in-lieu fee in accordance with a fee schedule adopted by the*
14 *Director where a street tree is destroyed, removed, or is excused from planting where otherwise*
15 *required by Section 806(d). The Department also shall assess an in-lieu fee or such other penalty as set*
16 *forth in Section 811 as mitigation for violation of the requirements of this Article 16. The Department*
17 *shall follow the requirements set forth herein for payment of an in-lieu fee unless it makes written*
18 *findings detailing the basis for waiving said requirements. As set forth in Section 811, in lieu fees shall*
19 *be deposited in the Public Works Adopt A-Tree Fund.*

20 (g) **Tree Adoption Program.** The Department shall develop and implement a tree
21 adoption program to allow persons to donate money for the purpose of tree planting and
22 maintenance. Money donated to the City and County for the purpose of tree planting and
23 maintenance shall be deposited into the Public Works Adopt-A-Tree Fund.

1 Section 4. Chapter 10, Article XIII of the Administrative Code is amended by revising
2 Section 10.100-227, to read as follows:

3
4 **SEC. 10.100-227. PUBLIC WORKS ADOPT-A-TREE FUND.**

5 (a) **Establishment and Use of Fund.** The Public Works Adopt-A-Tree Fund is
6 established as a category eight fund to receive all monetary donations, administrative fees,
7 permit fees, fines, liens, and in-lieu fees pursuant to Article 16 of the Public Works Code
8 which may be offered to or collected by the City and County for the planting and maintenance
9 of trees by the Department of Public Works. Within the Adopt-A-Tree Fund, the Controller shall
10 establish a separate account to receive all in lieu fees paid pursuant to Section 806(d)(4)(A) of the
11 Public Works Code and all interest received thereon.

12 (b) **Use of Fund.** The fund shall be expended solely for the purposes of planting and
13 maintaining trees under the jurisdiction of the Department of Public Works. For in lieu fees paid
14 pursuant to Section 806(d)(4)(A) of the Public Works Code, the funds shall be used solely to plant and
15 water trees for three years.

16 (c) **Administration of Fund.** The Department of Public Works shall submit to the
17 Board of Supervisors on a quarterly basis a written report of revenues to and expenditures
18 from the fund. For in lieu fees paid pursuant to Section 806, the Department of Public Works shall
19 coordinate with the Controller to provide annual and five-year reporting as described in Section
20 806(d)(5) of the Public Works Code.

21
22 Section 5. Article 1.2 of the Planning Code is amended by revising Section 138.1, to
23 read as follows:

24 **SEC. 138.1. STREETScape AND PEDESTRIAN IMPROVEMENTS.**

25 * * * *

1 (c) **Required streetscape and pedestrian improvements.** Development projects
2 shall include streetscape and pedestrian improvements on all publicly accessible right-of-ways
3 directly fronting the property as follows:

4 (1) **Street trees.** Project Sponsors shall plant and establish street trees as set
5 forth in Article 16, Sections 805(a) and 806(d) of the Public Works Code; provided, however,
6 that ~~where a property owner is either (A) adding an Accessory Dwelling Unit pursuant to Section~~
7 ~~207.1 or 207.2 of this Code or (B) legalizing a Dwelling Unit pursuant to Section 207.3 of this Code,~~
8 ~~the owner~~ may elect to pay the in-lieu fee authorized by Section 806(d)(4)(A) 807(f) of the Public
9 Works Code or, in circumstances where tree planting is impossible, impractical, and/or unsafe,
10 provide alternative sidewalk landscaping, as authorized in Section 806(d)(4)(B) of the Public Works
11 Code.

12 * * * *

13
14 Section 6. Scope of Ordinance. In enacting this ordinance, the Board of Supervisors
15 intends to amend only those words, phrases, paragraphs, subsections, sections, articles,
16 numbers, punctuation marks, charts, diagrams, or any other constituent parts of the Municipal
17 Code that are explicitly shown in this ordinance as additions, deletions, Board amendment
18 additions, and Board amendment deletions in accordance with the “Note” that appears under
19 the official title of the ordinance.

20
21 Section 7. Effective Date. This ordinance shall become effective 30 days after
22 enactment. Enactment occurs when the Mayor signs the ordinance, the Mayor returns the

23 //

24 //

1 ordinance unsigned or does not sign the ordinance within ten days of receiving it, or the Board
2 of Supervisors overrides the Mayor's veto of the ordinance.

3

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5 APPROVED AS TO FORM:
6 DAVID CHIU, City Attorney

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7 By: /s/ Giulia Gualco-Nelson
8 GIULIA GUALCO-NELSON
9 Deputy City Attorney

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