

**From:** [Natalie Downe](#)  
**To:** [Carroll, John \(BOS\)](#)  
**Subject:** Entering my public comment on item #5 into the record for today's supervisors meeting  
**Date:** Thursday, July 2, 2020 3:36:45 PM

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Hello,

Regarding item #5 in today's supervisors meeting I would like to submit my fill comment for public record as I didn't finish in the allotted time for public comment:

Hello, Natalie Downe from Hayes Valley, district 5 here

My comment is Relating to a culture of corruption and a culture lack of oversight of contractors

With regards to tree maintenance and removal, I'd love to ask what level of ecology training that tree pruning and removal contractors are required to have?

The reason I ask is because in operation of the work that happened this week to remove ficus trees in Hayes Valley, I filmed contractors doing heavy pruning on non-ficus trees that were not authorized and also had visible nests in, it is currently nesting season for birds. This should not have happened, certainly without any biologist oversight on site. DPW & Bureau of Urban Forestry have since admitted in writing that this was a mistake on behalf of the contractors.

This isn't an isolated incident, we can point to any number of mistakes by contractors with regards to interactions with trees, for example building projects that destroy trees by damaging roots without a permit to remove the trees, street work has happened that relief on trees being removed before the permit for removal is issued.

also just last nights in the Board of Appeals hearing, a case was brought where trees that have been removed before the appeals process of the permit had been completed, DPW claimed ignorance of the fact public could appeal permits and not knowing that this process had to reach conclusion before permits are officially issued and the trees removed as the reason for this error.

Each one of these incidents is an affront to the environment, and a degradation of the public trust.

When we plant a tree we have a responsibility to it to help it grow and protect it, both physically with watering and maintenance but also with process and adequate oversight for it not to be damaged or removed without justification.

The city's interaction with trees is largely unsupervised, and the current protocols for oversight are inadequate.

Since DPW took over stewardship and maintenance of the city's street trees a few years ago

the canopy has steadily and drastically diminished. Opting for removals rather than a more expensive pruning and maintenance schedule

San Francisco already has one of the the smallest urban canopy coverages in the country and in this time of climate change and increasing local temperatures we can't afford to loose any more. Removing mature healthy trees and replacing with small saplings with no watering budget is just appalling. Additionally replacement trees are also often non-californian native trees that offer little carbon sequestration and ecological benefits, like olive trees. One tree is not equivalent to another.

Director Nuru himself called for the removal of all ficus trees in the city, thousands of trees, claiming each tree as an emergancy removal in the interest of public safety, by way of avoiding the CEQA environmental protections and precautions that a project of this scale would usually undergo.

The City have been cagy about providing specific tree incidents' species data to the public for analysis but in the 2017 City's own tree census done in collaboration with the planning department, DPW, Friends of the urban forrest and arborpro, rated the risk of all the city's trees. Ficus is only the fifth most dangerous after plum, acacia, pittosporum, and London Plane.

We respectfully call for a halt to all tree removals not of imminent danger, pending an investigation into the ficus removal order and the ecology training and competence of contractors who work with trees.

Kind regards  
Natalie Downe

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Natalie Downe

**From:** [Kasey Rios Asberry](#)  
**To:** [Carroll, John \(BOS\)](#)  
**Cc:** [Mar, Gordon \(BOS\)](#); [Haney, Matt \(BOS\)](#); [Preston, Dean \(BOS\)](#); [Mahogany, Honey \(BOS\)](#); [PrestonStaff \(BOS\)](#); [Marstaff \(BOS\)](#)  
**Subject:** SFGOV Audit Committee Public Comment: #5 200279[ Hearing - Investigations Into Public Corruption]  
**Date:** Thursday, July 2, 2020 10:26:53 AM

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200279 [Hearing - Investigations Into Public Corruption]Sponsors: Mar; Haney and PrestonHearing on the progress and findings of investigations into public corruption; and requesting the Controller and City Attorney to report.

- 1) Since DPW took over stewardship of street trees the canopy has steadily and drastically diminished
- 2) Existent protocols for BUF oversight are inadequate re: SF Urban Forest Council, DPW Board of Appeals - Commissioner Tanner in hearing 2020.07.01 encouraged the public to ask for BOS help with this issue
- 3) We call for a halt to all non-emergency tree removals pending an investigation
- 4) Investigate:
  - En lieu fees and penalties for illegal removals: structure, assessment and amounts
  - Administration of Adopt-a-tree fund and en lieu fees
  - Actual costs of removals
  - Real value of trees: green infrastructure, ecology and public health contributions
  - Outdated ecology model that supports removing healthy trees because they are the wrong species without regard for climate change emergency
  - Lack of accountability for multiple DPW mistakes, reporting gaps, expedient design choices
  - Lack of responsiveness to ADA and public health requirements for access to nature in our most underserved communities

Moratorium on tree removals is an environmental health and justice priority.  
Investigation of improper incentives structure is a public fiduciary stewardship priority.

# 5-years of Tree Planting and Removal Since Urban Forest Plan Adopted

## DEFICIT TOWARDS GOAL



- Goal of planting 2500 trees per year to have 50,000 new trees in 20 years
- Net new trees added (planted – removed) is now a negative number
- More trees have been removed than planted during the past 5 years



Maric Munn, SF Healthy Street Trees Initiative, Demonstration Gardens May 2020



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 Bloom Where You Are Planted  
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 Healthy Street Trees Initiative  
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