



# Tree Maintenance Transfer Plan



## Overview

Most street trees in San Francisco are maintained by fronting property owners who, through their stewardship, are doing their part to keep this critical aspect of the city's infrastructure maintained. There are, however, more than 35,000 street trees that are the maintenance responsibility of the city. In order to sustain a healthy urban forest, the Department of Public Works is proposing to standardize maintenance responsibility such that, in general, property owners will be responsible for the maintenance of street trees in the public right of way.

## Why does the City need to transfer responsibility to property owners?

### Aligning Assets with Available Resources

DPW does not have the resources to prune and maintain trees at a frequency recommended by tree care industry experts. Over the past years, DPW has had to help balance the budget through cost saving measures by protecting core services. The current budget includes a tree crew (equivalent to about 10 arborists) that are responsible for maintaining street trees and responding to tree calls and requests from the public. Currently, DPW maintains 40,000 of the 100,000 street trees and responds to more than 3,700 calls every year. During the storm season, the department can receive up to 600 calls a week!

### Safety

Lack of maintenance can cause limb failures which can threaten public safety and damage property.

### Equitable Allocation of Tree Maintenance Responsibility

Two-thirds of property owners are already responsible for maintaining trees in front of their properties, while the maintenance of the remaining one-third is provided by city crews to private property owners.

## How many trees does the City plan on transferring?

DPW proposes transferring maintenance responsibility of approximately 24,000 trees to individual property owners over a seven year period. DPW proposes to transfer 3,400 sidewalk trees as part of the first phase. Most trees in the City are already maintained by private property owners who, through their stewardship, are helping to maintain the urban forest.

| Number of trees             | Before Transfer | After Transfer<br>(in 7 years) |
|-----------------------------|-----------------|--------------------------------|
| Privately-maintained        | 65,000          | 88,700                         |
| DPW Maintained Street Trees | 27,800          | 4,100                          |
| DPW Maintained Median Trees | 7,500           | 7,500                          |

## What will the City maintain?

The City will continue to maintain street trees on the street medians and those on city property with one tree crew: equivalent to about seven full time arborists. The crew will also be responsible for responding to all emergency related tree calls and requests from public.

## Which trees are being selected for transfer?

DPW will transfer 3,400 trees citywide as part of the first phase of the seven year process. Trees selected for maintenance responsibility by property owners will be in good condition and recently established or pruned.

## What are the benefits of maintaining City trees?

There are many benefits to an urban forest. Maintaining the City's trees will help to:

- create beauty and improve personal health
- improve air quality
- help reduce stormwater runoff
- conserve water and reduce soil erosion
- reduce noise pollution
- create wildlife and plant diversity
- increase property values
- take up carbon dioxide

## How will I know if a street tree (or trees) in front of my property is my maintenance responsibility?

DPW will follow the procedures in the Urban Forestry Ordinance and inspect all trees before transfer, to ensure they are healthy and properly pruned. Notices will be posted on trees and property owners will be notified by mail of the transfer plan. A tree care packet with information about how to properly care and maintain trees with pruning standards and details on how to request a public hearing will also be provided to property owners. Some property owners may be responsible for multiple trees adjacent to their property. DPW has set up a dedicated phone number, **(415) 554-7336**, and information on our website, [www.sfdpw.org](http://www.sfdpw.org), for tree questions and concerns.

## How do I take proper care of the tree I am responsible for?

DPW will provide information packets to property owners receiving maintenance responsibility for trees with recommendations for tree care, tree protection, and a copy of the urban forestry ordinance. Under the ordinance, all street trees are protected from harm and damage under the Public Works code.

Depending on the type of tree, property owners have the opportunity to fully receive the benefits of having a healthy tree and canopy through proper maintenance and care. The average pruning and maintenance cycle for a tree can be between three to six years.

## How much will this cost me?

Depending on the type and size of tree, pruning and maintenance costs can vary. A general range is between \$300 to \$1000 per visit for mature trees. Residents are encouraged to contact certified arborists for an estimate. DPW will provide resources and tips on how to properly maintain trees.

## My tree has not been posted but trees nearby have. Am I next?

If the tree adjacent to your property has not been posted, but nearby trees have, your tree has not been identified for relinquishment at this time but may be in the future. There is no need to contact the department if your tree has not been posted and you have not received a mailing.

For more information visit [www.sfdpw.org](http://www.sfdpw.org) or call 415-554-7336.