

Written Statement to the Urban Forestry Council  
March 20, 2018

My name is Josh Klipp, I'm a long-time San Francisco resident and volunteer Planting Leader with Friends of the Urban Forest. I'm also an attorney and, through the lens of my professional experience, wish to make this written statement including recommendations regarding San Francisco's street tree policies. I submit this statement in writing as I am unable to attend the upcoming March 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2018, Council meeting in person.

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First, I note that San Francisco lacks an integrated, comprehensive tree data management system. Agencies with responsibilities that include trees manage their data independently of one another. I respectfully request this Council work with the relevant City departments to remedy this so that the City can have thorough, accurate and informed tree data. Such data is crucial to measuring the efficacy of existing (and future) goals and actions regarding our urban forest.

Second, while Prop E funds the management of trees, it does not address funding for planting them. Street tree planting is currently done almost entirely by Friends of the Urban Forest, working cooperatively with the City. But FUF is a non-profit that struggles to find year-to-year funding for its work, let alone long term funding. FUF's success is fundamentally tied to the City's in reaching its stated urban forest goals. Therefore, I respectfully make the following recommendations regarding funding:

- Change the formula for development/renovation related plantings from frontage (i.e. every 20ft) to carbon footprint and environment impact. The City has notoriously limited acreage, which makes an equation based on frontage irrelevant. Instead, tie required tree plantings and in-lieu fees to the actual impact a development or renovation has on the City, e.g. how many units, parking spaces, energy usage, additional waste, etc. This will increase in-lieu fees that then go directly to tree plantings. It will also encourage smart development (i.e. a lower carbon footprint).
- Raise the general removal/replanting ratio from 1:1 to 1:3. Again, this will impact in-lieu fees to support plantings.
- Increase fines for illegal tree removals and tree topping.

Third, please influence Parks and Rec to increase their removal/replanting ratio to 1:3, minimally, ideally 1:4. San Francisco's open spaces (i.e. parks) have the room, and the City needs to leverage this for its urban canopy. Additionally, Parks and Rec have the ability to plant much larger species of trees, not only increasing canopy, but exponentially impacting our urban environment.

Fourth, please amend the existing Urban Forestry plan – released in the Fall of 2014 – to include a goal for percentage of urban canopy. Such a goal would give the City

more to strive for than just numbers of trees, but rather a percentage for an impactful canopy overall. It may also incentivize more cooperation across City agencies and departments to cross that percentage finish line together.

Fifth, do not allow required plantings to include palm trees. Beautiful as they are, palms are the environmental equivalent of planting blades of grass. The City needs trees that have maximum environmental impact, and that sequester carbon.

Finally, I respectfully request that the Department of Environment be encouraged to either create a new or transform an existing role to be 100% dedicated to the work needed to build, maintain and protect our urban forest. At a recent Commission on the Environment Policy Committee Meeting, Deborah Rafael described the Department of the Environment as a “conveyor” on City tree policies, i.e. the City agency responsible for bringing together and driving it forward. But, to date, there is no single FTE at DOE (or anywhere in the City) dedicated to this work. Former FUF employee and certified arborist, Gordon Matassa, is only City employee dedicated to this work at 50% of the time. Moreover the Commission on the Environment – a body charged with oversight regarding the City’s urban forest – does not appear to have taken any action in recent years regarding trees whatsoever. If the City is going to seriously work to increase our crucial urban canopy, there needs to be at least one person who is tracking, advising, communicating across agencies, and recommending effective policy. This is something the City could easily do by dedicating Mr. Matassa 100% of the time to this work, or create a new FTE.



These are my observations and suggestions based on information that is publicly available to me. Please note I have also been attending full Commission and committee meetings for the Commission on the Environment. My impression, to date, is that this powerful Commission is more focused on clean energy, zero waste, environmental justice, and green building (all incredible and amazing focuses, and there is great work being done in these areas). I do not see on the Commission, however, an appetite to pursue tree policies with the same vigor, or at all. I respectfully implore this Council to do everything in its power to push these issues forward, as will I through my continued comment and literally planting trees throughout the City. I also volunteer myself to your service, should anything I have to offer be of value to you in your efforts. Thank you for your attention to and consideration of these comments.