



SF Environment

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A Department of the City and County of San Francisco

London N. Breed
Mayor

Deborah O. Raphael
Director

Memo

Date: September 3, 2020
To: Urban Forestry Council Landmark Tree Ad Hoc Committee
From: Peter Brastow, Healthy Ecosystems Coordinator, Department of Environment
Re: Recommendations for Changes to the Public Works Code, Article 16, Section 810

Introduction

Per Article 16, Section 810(f)(1), the Urban Forestry Council must develop for recommendation to the Board of Supervisors uniform criteria, rules, and procedures governing determinations to remove landmark trees.

Currently, the code states that a Landmark Tree cannot be removed unless it is determined to be a hazard tree by the Director of Public Works. Recognizing that overarching criterion, we have proposed the following changes to clarify the process and ensure removal is only a last resort.

Proposed Changes to Article 16

- To Section 810(f)(1), add after “806(a)(2)”:
“and 806(a)(3)”
- Insert new subsections after Section 810 (f)(1):
 - A. *“If either a private property owner or a City agency desires to remove a Landmark Tree on its respective property, the Director’s determination of whether or not a Landmark Tree is a hazard tree, as per Section 802, shall be informed by a tree risk assessment performed by an ISA certified arborist.*
 - B. *The Director shall incorporate the tree risk assessment into the written finding that determines (as per Section 802) whether the Landmark Tree is a hazard tree. The Director’s finding shall include an explanation of whether the hazardous condition could be mitigated by another method (e.g., cabling or heavy pruning) other than total removal of the tree. If the Director’s finding indicates that the hazardous condition could be mitigated by an action or actions other than total removal of the tree, then the finding shall include specific recommendations for such actions.*
- Strike the last sentence from Section 810 (f)(2):
“Pending adoption of criteria for removal of landmark trees, the Department shall rely on the general criteria set forth in Section [810\(f\)\(4\)\(A\)-\(F\)](#).”
- Strike the second to last sentence from Section 810(f)(3):

“Pending the Board of Supervisor's adoption of the criteria, rules, and procedures pursuant to Section [810\(f\)\(1\)](#), the agency, commission, or department shall follow the general criteria of Subsection (f)(4)(A)-(F) and similar rules and procedures for removal of street trees as set forth in Section [806\(c\)](#) and for removal of hazard trees as set forth in this Section [806\(a\)\(4\)](#).”

- Add new subsection 810(f)(4)(G):

“(G) Whether the tree appears to have had routine maintenance and/or major maintenance as defined in Section [802](#).”

- Add into appropriate footnotes in the code:

“This ordinance was modified by the Board of Supervisors on recommendation from the Urban Forestry Council on X Date etc. etc.”