

Annual Report FISCAL YEAR 2020-2021

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San Francisco Public Works: Mission and Vision

San Francisco Public Works enhances the quality of life in San Francisco by providing outstanding public service. We design, build, operate, maintain, green and improve the City's infrastructure, public right of way and facilities with skill, pride and responsiveness in partnership with the San Francisco community.



Bureau of Urban Forestry: Mission and Vision

The Bureau of Urban Forestry enhances the City's green infrastructure by preserving, replacing and growing the trees and plants that make up our urban forest. The Bureau also repairs tree-related sidewalk damage.

Overview

StreetTreeSF is the first ever proactive maintenance program for the City's 125,000 street trees and tree-related sidewalks. Run by the San Francisco Public Works Bureau of Urban Forestry, StreetTreeSF's fourth year in operation marks a significant improvement in the level of care and maintenance of San Francisco's street trees have received in decades. After completing maintenance on the "worst first" in the previous fiscal year, the program continued to work through its carefully planned schedule to service all 125,000 street trees and associated tree-related sidewalk damage throughout San Francisco.

As a new, first-of-its-kind program, StreetTreeSF experienced its first major delays and setbacks with the COVID-19 pandemic. Scheduled operations were brought to a halt and upon resuming, required adjustments to be made to the program timeline and new expectations set with the public. Despite these challenges, StreetTreeSF remained resilient throughout the pandemic and continued to work safely to set new milestones for street tree pruning and tree-related sidewalk repair, making San Francisco's tree canopy healthier and safer than ever before.

Highlights from the Past Year

- Pruned 9,556 street trees; bringing to 48,632 the total number of trees cared for since the start of the program.
- Removed 1,244 unhealthy and structurally unsound trees.
- Completed 28,045 street tree inspections.
- Completed four several large maintenance projects to improve safety in high-traveled City corridors.

- Repaired 21,355 square feet of tree-related sidewalk damage and performed needed basin expansions.
- Purchased \$486,816 of new and replacement vehicles and equipment.
- Invested 221 hours in staff training and professional development.
- Continued outreach and communication focused on supporting community engagement with large maintenance projects, in addition to the development and upkeep of online information and advancing the general exposure of StreetTreeSF
- As we regain traction, StreetTreeSF will move to address trees with less intensive maintenance needs. The Bureau's hope is that this will lead to a faster pace and reduced pruning cycle.

How We Got Started

StreetTreeSF is the City of San Francisco's program to professionally maintain and care for San Francisco's 125,000 street trees. Managed by San Francisco Public Works' Bureau of Urban Forestry, StreetTreeSF is the result of a voter-approved 2016 ballot measure that gave Public Works maintenance responsibility for the City's street trees and set aside \$19 million annually to fund tree maintenance and tree-related sidewalk repairs.

In preparation for the implementation of StreetTreeSF, the Bureau of Urban Forestry completed a comprehensive point-in-time census of each street tree in San Francisco. The census provided the location and species of every street tree, as well as the condition, based on assessments made by professional arborists certified by the International Society of Arboriculture, or ISA.

The point-in-time census baseline information was used to develop a pruning schedule, giving preference to the trees most in need of immediate maintenance: the "worst first." These are trees that pose a safety risk in heavily traveled public rights of way due to such factors as disease or poor limb and/or root structure.

A similar point-in-time census was conducted of all tree impacts on sidewalks across the City. The high-priority areas of focus were further filtered by identifying tree-related sidewalk tripping hazards near senior centers, schools and bus stops and other areas heavily traveled by vulnerable populations.



Both tree and sidewalk maintenance are carried out using an efficient and cost-effective system. This system organizes the City into manageable blocks, called "keymaps," and each block gets routine inspections, pruning and tree-related sidewalk repairs.



With 79% voter-approval, Proposition E gave way to StreetTreesSF, the Public Works program to care and maintain the City's street trees and treerelated sidewalks.

Keymaps with the largest number of "worst first" trees and sidewalks received maintenance first to address immediate safety issues in public rights of way. Keymaps with less high-priority maintenance needs will be addressed after the worst first, later in the schedule.

StreetTreeSF drastically increased the scope of Public Works' tree maintenance responsibilities. Prior to July 1, 2017, the Bureau of Urban Forestry was responsible for maintaining approximately 30,000 street trees, with private property owners and other government agencies responsible for the rest. The Bureau is now responsible for the maintenance of all street trees throughout the City, many of which have been neglected or received inconsistent care over the years.

Continuing COVID-19 Impacts on Our Mission

Toward the end of FY 2019-20, the COVID-19 health crisis stopped scheduled street tree pruning and treerelated sidewalk repair work for months. Health orders forced City and contractor crews to pause work and reassess safety procedures to accommodate social distancing measures and stock up on personal protective equipment. Urban Forestry canceled \$2 million in purchasing contracts as City officials faced the challenge of covering wider budget shortfalls. The pandemic was a one-two punch, stalling forestry programs and slashing staffing.

During these months, Urban Forestry maintained approximately half of its workforce and focused only on essential, emergency projects. For internal Public Works tree crews, this meant that all scheduled maintenance work was put on hold and only the most essential work was completed, namely, the highest priority immediate public safety hazards and emergencies. For external contractor crews, this meant all work and contracts issued by Public Works were put on hold with an indefinite timeline.

Back to Work, While Maintaining Distancing

Entering FY 2020-21, health authorities determined it was safe for field staff to work within new safety guidelines, such as allowing only one person per truck travelling to and from worksites, to maintain social distancing. The guidelines significantly limited the number of staff members in the field, so crews continued to work on essential emergency projects only. StreetTreeSF contractors were also able to return to work. However, as with our internal tree crews, they had to refocus their efforts on emergency work only. This included urgent jobs throughout the City, such as removing fallen limbs, pedestrian and visibility obstructions and damaged trees.

StreetTreeSF tree-related sidewalk work was similarly affected by the pandemic. Sidewalk repair crews were paused as safety measures were put in place. When work resumed, crews refocused efforts from scheduled repair work to repair the highest priority sidewalk damage posing major tripping hazards in public rights –of way. Our cement crews were called on to create no-parking zones for portable bathrooms and handwashing stations that popped up citywide as a COVID-response initiative, which further impacted StreetTreeSF tree-related sidewalk repair efforts. Throughout the Operations group of Public Works, the cement crews supported the creation of Safe Sleeping Sites, as well as emergency sites for coronavirus testing, vaccinations and patient care.

All city employees are Disaster Service Workers meaning they can be reassigned on an emergency basis. To support the citywide response to the pandemic, several Bureau staff were assigned as hotel monitors to aid in the usage of hotels as temporary shelter for the unhoused. Our Public Information Officer was reassigned for a year to support the Department of Public Health's outreach and communications efforts. Another staff member was called up by the National Guard to support emergency response, and several General Laborers in the Bureau were tasked with supporting citywide testing and vaccination sites.

Momentum Gains and Losses



A silver lining of fewer people traversing the City was the ability to work on transit corridors for weeks at a time when normal maintenance windows only allow landscaping and paving activity at night or for limited periods paired with transit maintenance.

One bright side of the pandemic was that our sidewalk slicing contractor was able to continue maintenance work as planned throughout the health crisis. Their work is set up in a way that isolates them from the public and personal protective equipment was already a part of their safety measures. Due to less traffic, the Bureau also was able to work on transit corridors for weeks at a time when normal maintenance windows are only at night or for limited twoday periods paired with transit maintenance.

That said, staffing reductions due to COVID-19 heavily impacted Urban Forestry's ability to perform maintenance work. Arborists who contracted the coronavirus or were exposed to someone who tested positive had to quarantine. One Urban Forestry worker resigned due to the City's requirement that employees be vaccinated to return to the job. Additionally, some of those with children had to stay home due to school closures or to care for family members who had COVID-19 or who were exposed. As a result, many staff were out for extended periods between March and December 2020.

In the last four years, StreetTreeSF has advanced closer to a baseline maintenance schedule where routine pruning and sidewalk repair is standard. But the unexpected pause in work due to an unprecedented public health crisis will have

residual effects will be felt for years to come. During StreetTreeSF's initial startup phase (2017-2021), the Bureau prioritized the most urgent tree maintenance needs. While those urgent needs have been met, the timeline to reach baseline maintenance needs for all San Francisco's street trees is now extended to approximately eight

years. Once baseline conditions are met, routine maintenance activities will begin, including annual inspections of all street trees and pruning on a three- to five-year cycle, depending on the species of the tree.

Street Tree and Sidewalk Maintenance

Strategic Management of the Urban Forest

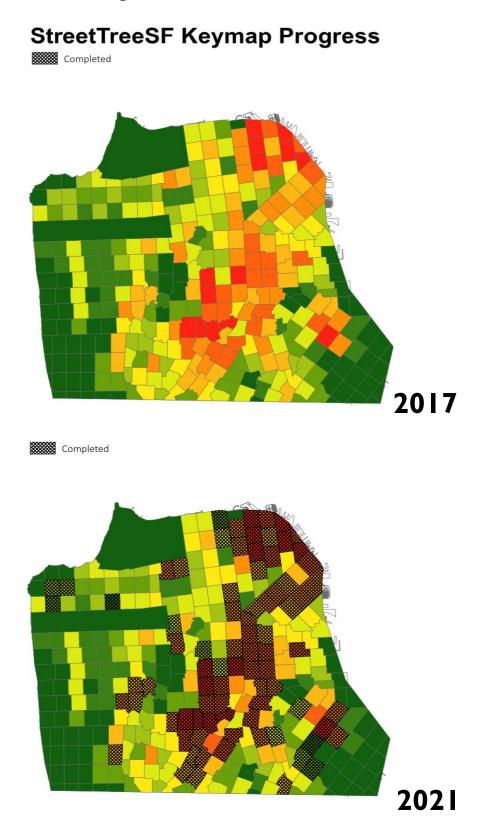
From the start of the program on July 1, 2017, our primary goal was to complete maintenance on the highest priority keymaps with the most trees and most complex maintenance needs, or the "worst first." In the last four years, StreetTreeSF has maintained 39% of San Francisco's street tree population. This 39% contains 100% of the highest priority tree maintenance work throughout the City that was desperately needed for decades.

In its fourth year, StreetTreeSF pruned 9,265 street trees. Of these, 5,029 trees were pruned by contractors and 4,236 trees by in-house crews. The Bureau's crews and contractors also removed 1,244 dead, dying or hazardous trees. Additionally, the Bureau issued 186 removal permits for trees removed by private entities.

StreetTreeSF continued using its block pruning approach to ensure resources are used most efficiently. Block pruning is the practice of performing maintenance on all trees on a City block instead of only on a single tree as part of a one-off service request. This approach leverages economies of scale and reduces per-tree maintenance costs by utilizing labor, vehicles, equipment, and traffic control for a larger volume of trees.



Priority Street Tree Pruning



Focus on Deferred Maintenance and Public Safety

StreetTreeSF has increased the resources available for tree pruning, removal and sidewalk repair which allowed for the initiation and execution of some large, long-awaited maintenance projects to improve public safety and green neighborhoods. These include the removal and replanting of trees around Washington Square Park (Columbus Street), in the Hayes Valley neighborhood, and along the Lower 24th Street corridor.

These projects needed to be prioritized for public safety. Aging ficus trees in these areas were structurally compromised and posed immediate safety concerns along heavily travelled public rights-of-way.

The 24th Street Tree Removal and Replacement Project encompassed the largest scope of work with 33 ficus trees needing removal, 24 blocks of tree-related sidewalk repair and the coordinated planting of 145 trees, all on a tight timeline based on the commitments made with the community and Board of Supervisors members and per the Urban Forestry Ordinance.

These large projects require detailed work from Urban Forestry Inspectors outside their regular day-to-day inspections; specific plans drafted on how many, and which species of replacement trees will be planted; coordination of contractor crews brought on to conduct the work; and significant public outreach to engage the nearby community.

Community Partners Take the Lead with Tree Planting

The removal of dead, diseased and dangerous trees during these first few years of StreetTreeSF has led to ongoing discussions on how best to secure funding to replenish and grow San Francisco's urban forest. StreetTreeSF strategically focuses on funding maintenance operations.

Under the voter-approved program, the dedicated funds do not cover new or replacement tree planting or the required three-year establishment period. Tree establishment, which requires weekly watering and more frequent pruning, is the most expensive part of tree planting.



Photo courtesy of Friends of the Urban Forest

Friends of the Urban Forest volunteers plant a new street tree paid for with private funds. Friends of the Urban Forest and Climate Action Now, another of the City's nonprofit partners, help water approximately 2,500 trees citywide. Residential watering is also a big help when it happens.

The small amount of money Urban Forestry does receive annually for street tree planting has been dedicated to areas of the City experiencing many removals, such as 24th Street in the Mission. The impact that these removals have on neighborhoods can seem severe and cause community concern; therefore, prioritizing replacement trees in these areas is very important. Our nonprofit partner, Friends of the Urban Forest, helps with the replacement of trees in these areas, as well.

But we need to replace every tree that has been removed throughout the City and start growing our urban forest, in every district and neighborhood. And we need additional resources to make this happen.

In FY 2020-21 we finalized our planting strategy which details the priorities and criteria for where we decide to plant trees. The planting strategy is in line with the Urban Forest Plan and focuses on prioritizing planting in neighborhoods with the lowest tree canopy and highest vulnerability to health and environmental hardships through an equity lens.

As important as acquiring and planting a tree is to our urban forest, post-planting and early-year care are fundamental to establishment success. Watering may seem like an easy, low-cost task, but it requires a dedicated person or crew, a reliable and easily accessible water source, and equipment. Young tree pruning requires skills training and consistent visits to train the tree. Consistency in care is crucial for street trees growing in an urban environment like San Francisco.

The financial needs for post-planting and early-year care are also detailed in the planting plan.

Friends of the Urban Forest and Climate Action Now, another nonprofit partner, help water approximately 2,500 trees citywide. Residential watering is also a big help when it happens. Engaging residents and property owners to invest in a newly planted tree by watering weekly significantly increases the tree's survival chances. When a resident offers to water a street tree and follows through, they help improve our urban forest, and we all can watch as that tree grows and becomes a beautiful addition to our City's green infrastructure.

Street trees are essential to the livability of San Francisco because of their physical, environmental, health and economic benefits. However, their value only can be realized if new trees are managed effectively from inception and through establishment. This requires a big investment in resources to water and prune young trees.

Slicing Through Tree-Root Damaged Sidewalks

Since July 1, 2017, StreetTreeSF's parallel primary goal was to complete the repair of the highest priority tree-related sidewalk damage citywide. In FY 2020-21, StreetTreeSF cement crews removed and replaced 21,355 square feet of damaged sidewalk.

Many of those square feet came from the sidewalk repair work our cement shop completed as a part of the 24th Street Tree Removal and Replacement project. Twenty-four City blocks of severely damaged and raised sidewalk from ficus tree roots were removed and replaced to eliminate tripping hazards in one of the City's most highly travelled commercial corridors.

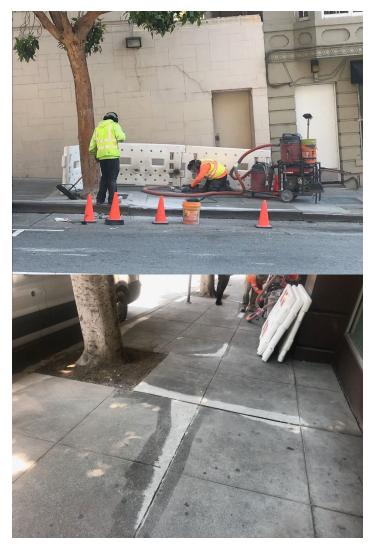


Urban Forestry cement shop crew members repair a sidewalk damaged by tree roots in the Outer Sunset District of San Francisco.

If tree-related sidewalk damage is not too severe, but still poses a tripping hazard, it is repaired by a method known as concrete slicing. Concrete slicing involves cutting away only elevated parts of the path and applying patching when necessary to create an even surface. In FY 2020-21, our StreetTreeSF contractor sliced 22,043 sites throughout the City. To date, a total of 62,449 sites have been sliced throughout the City.

Concrete slicing has sped along sidewalk repairs greatly. Our slicing contractor was able to continue working during COVID-19 shelter-in-place orders without having to pause. The decrease in pedestrian traffic during shelter-in-place made it possible for slicing to happen even more efficiently. Urban Forestry began to receive inquiries about the concrete slicing as the level of work has continued to increase over the last four years. To answer questions and concerns, we created a one-page information sheet about concrete slicing.

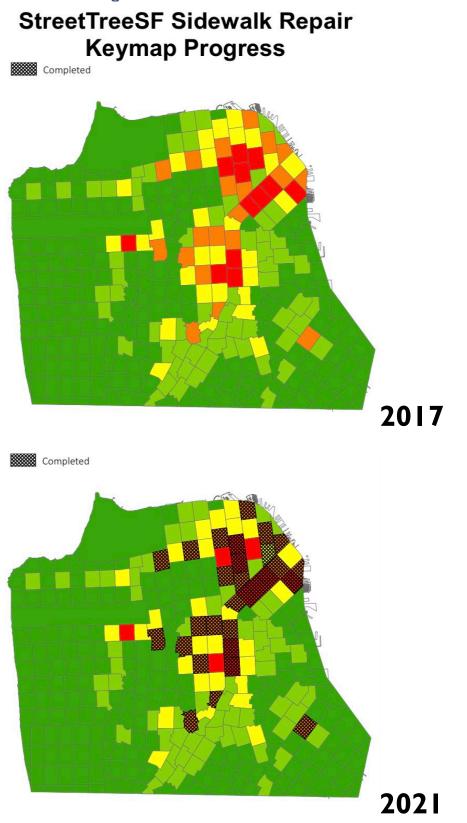
The combination of tree-related sidewalk damage removal and replacement and concrete slicing has allowed for the repair of all "hot spot" areas citywide to keep pedestrians safe while travelling in high-traffic public rights of way. "Hot spots" are tree-related sidewalk damage areas located near neighborhood commercial corridors, schools, hospitals, senior centers and the Vision Zero high-injury network.





The use of concrete slicing has sped up sidewalk repairs and improved pedestrian safety in many neighborhoods.

Tree-Related Sidewalk Damage Areas



Equipment and Vehicles

ltem	Before StreetTreeSF	FY 17/18 Purchased Equipment	FY 18/19 Purchased Equipment	FY 19/20 Purchased Equipment	FY 20/21 Purchased Equipment	Total
Aerial Lift Bucket Truck	6	2	5	2	0	12 <u>*</u>
Knuckle Boom	1	0	0	0	0	1
Chipper	4	3	1	6	0	14
Chipper Truck	5	2	0	0	0	6 <u>*</u>
Stump Grinder	2	0	7	0	0	7 <u>*</u>
Backhoe Loader	0	1	1	0	0	2
Saw Truck	0	2	1	0	0	3
Compressor	1	1	0	0	0	2
Utility Truck	10	6	9	0	0	25
10-Wheel Dump Truck	0	0	1	2	0	3
Mini Dump Truck	1	2	3	2	0	8
Packer	1	0	0	0	0	1
Air Compressor	0	0	1	0	0	1
Mini-Excavator	0	0	1	0	0	1
Cement mixer	0	0	0	0	1	1
Bobcat trailer		0	0	0	1	1
Ford Escape SUVs	0	0	0	0	3	2
TOTALS	31	19	30	12	5	91 <u>*</u>

Current Inventory and New Equipment and Vehicle Purchases (2017-2021)

*12 pieces of equipment or vehicles surrendered for not meeting CARB standards or decommissioned due to multiple operational issues that made vehicle unserviceable.

The Bureau continued to utilize StreetTreeSF's funding to purchase equipment and vehicles to accommodate the increased workload and staffing. In FY 2020-21, the Bureau purchased five new and replacement vehicles and other equipment, valued at approximately \$486,816. The new equipment included a cement mixer, a Bobcat trailer and three Ford Escape SUVs. The replacement equipment updated old vehicles with frequent breakdowns and high repair costs.

Staffing and Training

Staffing Plan and Hiring

The COVID-19 emergency compounded the increased workload and demands of StreetTreeSF. In FY 2020-21, there were three staff transfers to Urban Forestry, three new hires, three retirements, and one loss to the vaccine mandate. As of June 30, the Bureau had 16 Arborist Technician I's; four Supervisor I's; one Supervisor II and one apprentice.

The Bureau continues to work to fill vacant positions with a focus on Arborists Technicians, but continues to encounter challenges including:

- finding qualified Arborist Technician applicants due to a limited pool of candidates
- working through hiring backlog due to human resources delays impacted by the COVID-19 crisis
- working within the limits of a new budget, cut by \$2 million to assist the City with the COVID-19 response
- only hiring COVID-19-related positions after March 2020, leaving vacant positions unfilled for an undetermined amount of time

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			StreetTreeSF Funded Positions					
Job Title	Class Number	Existing Positions	Total Additional Positions	HIRED	LEFT	VACANT	Total Potential Staff	Total Current Staff
Arborist Tech	3434	13	14	8	5	11	27	16
Arborist Supervisor I	3436	3	3	1	0	2	6	4
General Laborer	7514	0	14	6	0	8	14	6
Principal Administrative Analyst	1824	0	1	1	0	0	1	1
Public Information Officer	1312	0	1	1	0	0	1	1
Urban Forestry Inspector	3435	5	2	1	0	1	7	6
Senior Clerk	1406	1	1	1	0	0	2	2
Cement Finisher Supervisor I	7227	0	1	1	0	0	1	1
Cement Mason	7311	0	4	4	0	0	4	4
Operating Engineer	7328	0	1	1	0	0	1	1
Truck Driver	7355	3	1	1	0	0	4	4
Manager IV	932	0	1	1	0	0	1	1
Principal Business Analyst	1054	0	1	1	0	0	1	1
Management Assistant	1842	0	1	0	0	1	1	0
Apprentice Arborist Tech	3408	1	8	0	0	9	9	1
Clerk	1404	0	1	0	0	1	1	0
	TOTALS	26	55	28	5	33	81	49

StreetTreeSF Staffing Plan (2017-2021)

Training and Staff Development

In FY 2020-21, the Bureau invested 761 hours in staff training to ensure safe operations and high-quality service delivery. All staff are required to complete at least 10 hours of professional development training annually. The decrease in training hours this year is primarily due to the COVID-19 health crisis shelter-in-place order which limited in-person training. Training completed by Bureau staff includes:

- Line Clearance Arborist Certification (Arborists)
- Cone Delineation/Traffic Control Techniques (Arborists, Cement Masons, Laborers)
- Defensive Driving (All)
- Safety/Code of Safe Practice (All)
- Stump Grinding (Arborists)
- City Pruning Standards (Arborists)

Urban Forest Inspection

The condition of every street tree in San Francisco has changed since the street tree census conducted in 2016. So once a keymap is identified as upcoming on the maintenance schedule, an Urban Forestry ISA-certified Arborist, or an Urban Forestry Inspector, walks the entire keymap – between 10 to 12 city blocks – to assess the current condition of each street tree and make maintenance recommendations. The pre-inspection of a keymap is a critical component of StreetTreeSF program that necessitates a substantial amount of time and effort. Additionally, inspections are conducted after a keymap has been completed (and sometimes during the specific operation) to check the quality and consistency of the maintenance work being provided.

In FY 2020-21, Urban Forestry Inspectors completed 28,045 internal and public inspections. Internal inspections include the inspection of keymap areas before, during and after maintenance. Public inspection activities include responding to public service requests through the 311-customer service center, assessing tree and sidewalk conditions outside of scheduled maintenance, and reviewing development and tree removal permits.

In July 2021, the Urban Forestry Inspection Team moved to a brand-new building, the City's consolidated permit center located at 49 South Van Ness Avenue. The Inspection Team continued their work amid the move and as they settled into the new location.

Communications and Outreach

StreetTreeSF communications and outreach is comprised of a well-oiled system of advance public notice of maintenance work, revised tree removal public notices, and a new and improved display of our urban forest.

Last year, some outreach efforts shifted and focused on much needed and long-awaited maintenance projects the Bureau can now conduct with the resources from StreetTreeSF. Several of these large removal and

replacement projects were implemented in FY 2020-21 and targeted communication updates and open avenues for feedback, concerns and questions remained a high priority to ensure the success of the projects

The 24th Street Tree Removal and Replacement project was the project with the largest scope the Bureau has ever had an opportunity to undertake. Discussions and negotiations over the number of trees to be removed, the number of trees to be pruned and the number of trees to be planted took more than two years to iron out. Therefore, the communication of project progress was necessary and incredibly appreciated by the community and all stakeholders involved.

The communication and outreach accomplishments in FY 2020-21 include:

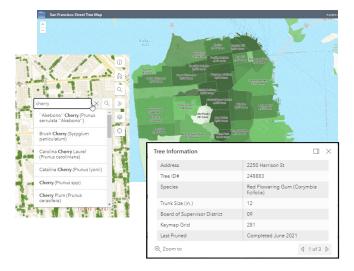
- Development and implementation of information and materials to support the 24th Street Tree Removal and Replacement project, including a project webpage, multi-lingual, bi-weekly project updates, promotion of bi-weekly updates through neighborhood group and association social media and newsletters, coordination and notification of tree logs available for community use, and responding to public inquires and comments.
- Launched a new and improved interactive online street tree map, with old features (keymaps, pruning dates, number of trees) now supplemented with multiple new features including all street trees mapped along with Tree ID, species and trunk size; filters for Board of Supervisor districts or neighborhood; the ability to search for a specific tree location or for specific species citywide.
- Creation of one-pagers for crews in the field approached by members of the public with questions or concerns regarding concrete slicing and street tree watering
- Revamp of all street tree removal notification postings, including 30-day, 15-day (hazard) and emergency removals, to clarify the party initiating removal, the reason(s) for removal, and replacement information and reasoning.
- Updated tree-maintenance street signs to include QR code and new Bureau contact information (49 South Van Ness number) and developed new street signs specific to sidewalk repair and concrete slicing work.
- Improved the Tree Removal Notification webpage, the online notification platform for the public to view details associated with tree removals citywide, to display tree removals posted by other City agencies.
- Continued timely distribution of door hangers in keymap area before the start of maintenance activities.
- Continued updates to the Bureau of Urban Forestry's website, including updates to fees, forms and applications.

24th Street Tree Removal and Replacement Project



StreetTreeSF's largest maintenance project to improve public safety was implemented this fiscal year. The stretch of lower 24th Street from Mission Street to Potrero Avenue experienced the removal of 33 hazardous ficus trees, the repair of 24 blocks of sidewalk damage and the planting of 60 new trees. A new community group was also born to water the newly planted trees.

San Francisco Street Tree Map



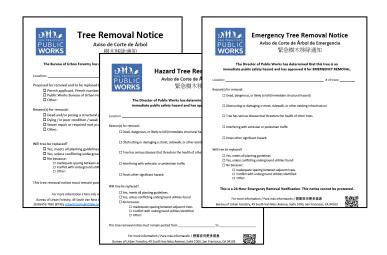
The new San Francisco Street Tree Map was launched to provide members of the public as well as Urban Forestry professionals with information about all 125,000 street trees. The map incorporates several layer options, location and species searches and details about any tree clicked on including the next estimated maintenance timeframe.

Informational One-Pagers



StreetTreeSF's impact is increasing and proof of that is evident when members of the public approach our crews and contractors to ask for more information. Our concrete slicing contractor and water partners are examples of our work getting noticed. We created one-pagers for crews to have on hand in the field to share with the public.

Street Tree Removal Notification Postings



A complete revision of Tree Removal Posting notices for public notification made our 30-day, 15-day and 24-hour notices easier to read, with more information on the reasons for removal as well as the reasons for replacement or non-replacement.

Financial Summary

In FY 2020-21, StreetTreeSF's annual budget totaled \$18 million. The amount programmed and encumbered totaled \$14,000,000 with the largest amounts dedicated to Bureau of Urban Forestry staff and tree maintenance contractors. The year-end balance is \$3,000,000, as shown in the accompanying table. Due to the fiscal impact

Expense	Prior Year Balance	Amount Budgeted	Actuals	Year End Balance
Staff	(\$7,500,000)	\$12,500,000	\$10,600,000	(\$5,600,000)
Contractors	4,500,000	\$3,100,000	\$3,100,000	\$4,500,000
Equipment & Vehicles	2,400,000	\$2,400,000	\$700,000	\$4,100,00
Total	4,000,000	\$18,000,000	\$14,000,000	\$3,000,000

of the COVID-19 pandemic, the StreetTreeSF baseline was reduced by \$2 million at the end of FY 2020-21 to aid Citywide General Fund rebalancing efforts.

