

1 **OBJECTION HEARING REGARDING PROPOSED TREE REMOVAL**

2  
3 **IN THE MATTER OF** )

4 **THE PROPOSED REMOVAL OF STREET** )  
5 **TREES AT CRAGS COURT** )

**HEARING OFFICER’S DECISION**

6 )  
7 )  
8 )  
9 **INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND**

10  
11 The San Francisco Public Utilities Commission (“SFPUC”) held a public hearing on  
12 September 19, 2024, via remote video platform to consider the community’s objection to the SFPUC’s  
13 proposed removal of one street tree at Crags Court under Section 806 of the Public Works  
14 Code. The SFPUC Chief Financial Officer appointed the undersigned to serve as hearing officer per  
15 SFPUC guidelines concerning Public Works Code Article 16 tree removal hearings. Prior to the  
16 hearing, the parties submitted pre-hearing statements and exhibits. At the hearing, SFPUC staff and the  
17 Crags Court community presented testimony and arguments concerning the tree removal. Irella  
18 Blackwood, SFPUC Audit Bureau Director, fulfilled the duties of the Hearing Officer.

19 **OVERVIEW OF EVIDENCE AND ARGUMENTS**

20 1. Jon Cantu presented on behalf of the SFPUC project team. The proposed tree removals  
21 arise from SFPUC’s Water Main Replacement on Gold Mine Drive Project. This project seeks to replace  
22 smaller existing water mains to improve reliability in a neighborhood that has had a history of repeated main  
23 breaks. This project will maintain critical utility services, avoid disruptive emergency repairs and upsized  
24 pipelines to improve water flows for firefighting.

25 2. The project team consulted with the Bureau of Urban Forestry to verify risks to trees. In  
26 addition, the SFPUC determined through engineering analysis that this was the most suitable location  
27 for the water main replacements. This analysis considered alternatives to mitigate the need to remove  
28 trees and ultimately was unable to limit the impact to the two trees.



1           4.       Outside of the scope of this hearing, Sophie Constantinou provided compelling  
2 arguments that the City overall can do more to replace street trees. Specifically, her contention that in-  
3 lieu fees are insufficient mitigation to tree loss may merit further investigation with the other City  
4 departments responsible for setting the fee (Controller and Board of Supervisors) and implementing the  
5 process (Public Works) to ensure that payment of in-lieu fees actually produces results equivalent to the  
6 full replacement of the tree(s) that are lost.

7           5.       As provided by SFPUC guidelines concerning his process, this decision may be  
8 appealed to the General Manager or his designee. Such appeal must be filed no later than 15 days from  
9 the date of this decision by submitting it to Audit Bureau Director Irella Blackwood at  
10 [iblackwood@sfgov.org](mailto:iblackwood@sfgov.org)

11 Dated: 9-24-2024

*Irella Blackwood*  
**Irella Blackwood**  
**Hearing Officer**