



September 16, 2025

Chair Ed Harrington and Members,
Commission Streamlining Task Force

Dear Chairperson Harrington and Members,

On behalf of the Urban and Community Forestry Society (UCFS), I am writing to express our strong support for the City of San Francisco's Urban Forestry Council. San Francisco is widely recognized as a global leader in urban forestry, and the Council is critical to that success.

UCFS is an international association of urban forestry professionals dedicated to advancing best management practices and maximizing the benefits of the urban forest. From our vantage point, we see cities across the globe struggle to protect existing trees and invest in proactive tree care. San Francisco stands out as a model community that others look to for inspiration and guidance. UCFS is currently updating our professional benchmarks for urban forestry excellence, and a fully functioning council like San Francisco's will be one of the elements we recommend for communities seeking to meet the needs of their residents and trees.

The Urban Forestry Council plays a vital role in uniting city departments, nonprofit partners, and residents around a shared vision for the urban forest. Its oversight ensures that tree protection, planting, and care plans are coordinated, effective, and accountable. Without this structure, efforts can become fragmented—leading to inefficiencies, inequitable tree distribution, and missed opportunities to expand canopy cover.

The Council's leadership was critical in passing Proposition E in 2016 creating StreetTreeSF and securing sustainable funding to care for the city's 124,000 street trees. This achievement demonstrates the Council's ability to turn vision into results. Building on this foundation, the Council is well positioned to lead the next phase of the Urban Forest Plan, addressing park trees and private property trees to ensure that San Francisco's entire canopy is managed equitably and sustainably.

We recognize that cities must balance many priorities. However, in an era of rising temperatures and increasing climate stress, now is not the time to weaken a proven system that protects and grows the city's tree canopy. Trees are one of the most cost-effective and equitable tools for cooling neighborhoods, reducing stormwater runoff, improving air quality, and enhancing public health.

We strongly encourage the City of San Francisco to maintain and fully support its Urban Forestry Council and its collaborative partnerships. Doing so will ensure that San Francisco continues to lead globally in urban forestry and remains a model city that others aspire to emulate. UCFS looks forward to celebrating San Francisco's ongoing commitment to trees and the measurable benefits they provide for generations to come.

Sincerely,

Leslie Berckes
Executive Director, Urban and Community Forestry Society