

**BOARD OF APPEALS, CITY & COUNTY OF SAN FRANCISCO**

Appeal of  
JOSHUA KLIPP,

Appeal No. **26-033**

Appellant(s)

VS.

SAN FRANCISCO PUBLIC WORKS,

Respondent

## NOTICE OF APPEAL

**NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN THAT** on June 22, 2026, the above named appellant(s) filed an appeal with the Board of Appeals of the City and County of San Francisco from the decision or order of the above named department(s), commission, or officer.

The substance or effect of the decision or order appealed from is the ISSUANCE on June 5, 2026 of a Public Works order (Approval for the city to remove a Sycamore tree that is healthy and in fair condition. Removal is necessary so that an ADA compliant curb ramp can be built. Replacement will be relocated elsewhere on the block or added to deferred replacement report if replacement location is not found within 120 days) at 699 Rhode Island Street.

**ORDER NO. : 300079**

**FOR HEARING ON August 26, 2026**

Address of Appellant(s):

Address of Other Parties:

Joshua Klipp, Appellant(s)  
884 Kansas Street  
San Francisco, CA 94107

San Francisco Public Works  
c/o Au Bui, Assistant Engineer  
49 South Van Ness Avenue, 8<sup>th</sup> Floor  
San Francisco, CA 94103



Date Filed: June 22, 2026

**CITY & COUNTY OF SAN FRANCISCO  
BOARD OF APPEALS**

**PRELIMINARY STATEMENT FOR APPEAL NO. 26-033**

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I / We, **Joshua Klipp**, hereby appeal the following departmental action: **ISSUANCE** of **Public Works Order No: 300079** which was issued or became effective on: **June 5, 2026**, to: **San Francisco Public Works**; approval to remove one street tree at **699 Rhode Island Street**.

**BRIEFING SCHEDULE:**

Appellant's Brief is due on or before: 4:30 p.m. on **July 23, 2026, (no later than three Thursdays prior to the hearing date)**. The brief may be up to 12 pages in length with unlimited exhibits. It shall be double-spaced with a minimum 12-point font. An electronic copy shall be emailed to: [boardofappeals@sfgov.org](mailto:boardofappeals@sfgov.org), [julie.lamarre@sfgov.org](mailto:julie.lamarre@sfgov.org), [bryan.ong@sfdpw.org](mailto:bryan.ong@sfdpw.org), and [au.bui@sfdpw.org](mailto:au.bui@sfdpw.org)

Respondent's and Other Parties' Briefs are due on or before: 4:30 p.m. on **August 6, 2026, (no later than one Thursday prior to hearing date)**. The brief may be up to 12 pages in length with unlimited exhibits. It shall be doubled-spaced with a minimum 12-point font. An electronic copy shall be emailed to: [boardofappeals@sfgov.org](mailto:boardofappeals@sfgov.org), [julie.lamarre@sfgov.org](mailto:julie.lamarre@sfgov.org), and [joshuaklipp@gmail.com](mailto:joshuaklipp@gmail.com)

Hard copies of the briefs do NOT need to be submitted to the Board Office or to the other parties.

Hearing Date: **Wednesday, August 12, 2026, 5:00 p.m., Room 416 San Francisco City Hall, 1 Dr. Carlton B. Goodlett Place**. The parties are encouraged to attend in-person but may also attend remotely via Zoom. Information for access to the hearing will be provided before the hearing date.

All parties to this appeal must adhere to the briefing schedule above, however if the hearing date is changed, the briefing schedule MAY also be changed. Written notice will be provided of any changes to the briefing schedule.

In order to have their documents sent to the Board members prior to hearing, **members of the public** should email all documents of support/opposition no later than one Thursday prior to hearing date by 4:30 p.m. to [boardofappeals@sfgov.org](mailto:boardofappeals@sfgov.org). Please note that names and contact information included in submittals from members of the public will become part of the public record. Submittals from members of the public may be made anonymously.

**Please note** that in addition to the parties' briefs, any materials that the Board receives relevant to this appeal, including letters of support/opposition from members of the public, are distributed to Board members prior to hearing. All such materials are available for inspection on the Board's website at [www.sfgov.org/boa](http://www.sfgov.org/boa). You may also request a hard copy of the hearing materials that are provided to Board members at a cost of 10 cents per page, per S.F. Admin. Code Ch. 67.28.

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**The reasons for this appeal are as follows:** [To be submitted]

**Appellant or Agent:**

Signature: Via Email

Print Name: Joshua Klipp, appellant

**Appeal No. 26-033 | One - Page Statement | Joshua Klipp**

The Department's decision permitting the removal of a mature, healthy Sycamore tree at 699 Rhode Island for the installation of a crosswalk should be overturned.

First, there is a viable, alternative crosswalk location at this same intersection that achieves disability access compliance *without* tree removal.

Second, the proposed location of the new crosswalk at 19th and Rhode Island creates a brand new danger to pedestrians - especially those with disabilities - because it apparently includes no accompanying signals or signage for protection. At the Administrative Hearing on this proposed removal, the Department's representative indicated that installing any crosswalk protective signage would be the SFMTA's problem, not the Department of Public Works'.

In summary, as proposed, removing a tree for a crosswalk in the name of disability access actually creates a new safety hazard for *all* pedestrians. Additionally, there is a viable, arguably more safe, and equally accessible alternative crosswalk location at this same intersection that does not require tree removal.



San Francisco Public Works  
General – Director's Office  
49 South Van Ness Ave., Suite 1600  
San Francisco, CA 94103  
(628) 271-3160 [www.SFPublicWorks.org](http://www.SFPublicWorks.org)

### **Public Works Order No: 300079**

The Director of Public Works held a Public Hearing on Wednesday April 15, 2026, commencing at 10:00AM via teleconference to consider items related to tree removals. The hearing was held through videoconferencing to allow remote public comment.

The hearing was to consider Order 212741 (Permit No. 805566) regarding the removal of one (1) street tree without replacement adjacent to 699 Rhode Island St. Staff denied the removal and the applicant has appealed.

**Staff:** Gene Chan (Hearing officer), Bryan Ong (Bureau of Urban Forestry representative), Kevin Jensen (Disability Access Coordinator)

General public comment: San Francisco has the smallest urban tree canopy. It is failing its 2014 urban forest plan, climate action, and preservation policies. There has been no net gain in trees since 2017, and it continues to degrade the health of the ecosystem. The country is wildly back-sliding, ramping up coal and oil production while cutting back on promoting resilience. We must preserve our climate and environment and fight for our future.

### **Findings:**

The Bureau of Urban Forestry has observed that:

- One (1) Sycamore, London Plane tree is being proposed for removal.
- The street tree is 20' in height and 9" at DBH. The tree is healthy and in fair condition.
- Removal was proposed to construct a curb ramp, but BUF believes redesign is possible (shift the ramp, bulbout alternatives).
- This intersection is not in the highinjury network, and no pedestrian collisions have occurred.
- Losing this tree removes canopy and planting space unnecessarily.

The department's disability access coordinator has observed that:

- Federal & state ADA rules mandate curb ramps at all legal crossings, including unmarked crosswalks. This intersection has three legal unmarked crossings, and the curb ramp must be placed at the location of the tree for technical feasibility.

- The ramp cannot be shifted due to: Overlapping driveways, Vertical roadway slope, Crossslope accessibility requirements. Bulbouts would not resolve the conflict; the tree remains in the required landing area.
- If the City fails ADA compliance, it risks significant liability, lawsuits, and federal enforcement.
- A replacement tree could be planted somewhere nearby.

**Number of Public Comments Received:** 2 public comments.

**Public Comment Summary:** Josh Klipp argued that almost no one crosses here and that adding a marked crossing may increase danger, since there is no stop sign and cars travel fast downhill. He believed maintaining the tree would help traffic calming. He believed the proposed crosswalk is unnecessary.

John Nulty argued installing a new crosswalk creates more liability for the City. Believed conditions should remain as is; supports denying the appeal and retaining the tree.

**Recommendation:** Approve removal without replacement in accordance with Article 16 code requirements. Replacement will be relocated elsewhere on the block or added to deferred replacement report if replacement location is not found within 120 days.

#### **APPEAL:**

This Order and permit may be appealed to the Board of Appeals within 15 days of June 5, 2026.

Board of Appeals

49 South Van Ness Ave. suite 1475 (14th Floor)

San Francisco, CA 94103

Phone: 628.652.1150 Email: [BoardofAppeals@sfgov.org](mailto:BoardofAppeals@sfgov.org)

NOTE: Office visits by appointment only.

More information about how to file an appeal can be obtained by calling 628-652-1150 or by emailing the Board of Appeals at [BoardofAppeals@sfgov.org](mailto:BoardofAppeals@sfgov.org). For additional information on the San Francisco Board of Appeals and to view the Appeal Process Overview, please visit their website at <http://sfgov.org/bdappeal/>



**Signatures:**

Signed by:  
  
18194A932E054E5...

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**Short, Carla (DPW)**

Dept Head IV

Date Signed: 6/4/2026 | 4:56:03 PM PDT

## BRIEF SUBMITTED BY THE APPELLANT(S)

## I. INTRODUCTION

I, Joshua Klipp, respectfully oppose San Francisco Public Works' (SFPW) decision to issue itself a permit to remove a tree (that cannot be replaced in situ) at 699 Rhode Island. I am the former Vice Chair of the Urban Forestry Council, a 16+ year Planting Leader with Friends of the Urban Forest, co-Founder of Mission Verde, an attorney, and a Certified Access Specialist (CASP 812) through California's Division of the State Architect.<sup>12</sup>

## II. SUMMARY<sup>3</sup>

1. Contrary to PROWAG Design Guidelines, there is no evidence SFPW explored *any* alternatives to the proposed curb ramp location, and further squandered 792 days between asserting the tree needed to be removed and receiving the underlying decision.
2. PROWAG Design Guidelines specifically call for exploration of alternatives in alteration projects with existing site constraints, citing, e.g., *a mature tree*, as here.
3. BUF's repeated requests to the SFPW team to review alternatives went unanswered.
4. An independent CASp noted that the proposed location is the *least* safe, and that there are three potential, safer, alternatives, none of which SFPW apparently explored.

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<sup>1</sup> This is a certification deeming me qualified by the State to evaluate accessibility for people with disabilities in the built environment including, e.g. Public Rights of Way (PROW).

<sup>2</sup> While this experience and expertise informs my advocacy for San Francisco's urban forest, I submit this brief as a member of the public.

<sup>3</sup> I do not dispute the legal requirement to place an accessible crosswalk/curb ramp at this location. I agree that the previous curb ramp on the east side of Rhode Island at this intersection wouldn't meet current ADA and CBC technical requirements.

5. At a minimum, the final decision fails to address appraisal fees and new tree planting locations, despite BUF stating these would be required for removal.

### **III. FACTUAL BACKGROUND**

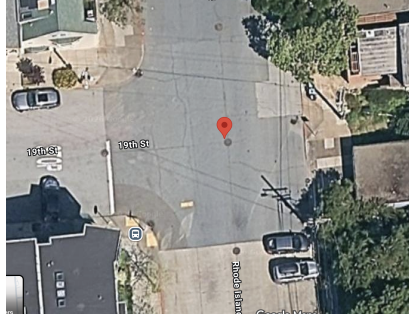
This appeal concerns the permanent removal of a healthy Sycamore tree<sup>4</sup> - 20 feet high, 9" at dbh - for installation of a curb ramp at the intersection of 19th and Rhode Island Streets in Potrero Hill. For context, 19th and Rhode Island is a "T" intersection. Rhode Island runs north/south; 19th runs east/west. 19th Street does not go through at Rhode Island, but skips a block and picks back up at DeHaro, one block east. Notably, there is no stop sign at this intersection for north/south traffic on Rhode Island.

I've lived a few blocks from this intersection since 2007. It's common practice among the neighbors to take Rhode Island rather than the Kansas or DeHaro Streets, because the lack of a stop sign means a faster drive. GIS topographic data shows that Rhode Island between 20th and 19th has a moderate to steep slope, calculated at a roughly 15% to 16% grade. This generally causes northbound traffic to move more quickly as well. This is why I was shocked to learn at the hearing that a crosswalk and curb ramp were being added at this location for disability access, with no stop sign, and no apparent consideration for the danger this might create for pedestrians with disabilities or who - worse yet - use wheelchairs, and have to cross streets in a low, seated position.

For now, this intersection is not on the City's High Injury Network (HIN). Here's an overhead view of the intersection:

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<sup>4</sup> This tree was apparently planted by a family member of the resident at 699 Rhode Island, and he has tended to it for ~20 years.



The light green tree at the top right is the Sycamore proposed for removal. At the bottom left is a bus stop (an important fact regarding alternative, safer locations, below).

Even though I am a Certified Access Specialist (CASP), I asked a CASp colleague, Shao Chen, if he wouldn't mind meeting at the location to determine if there were alternatives to this crosswalk/curb ramp placement. Mr. Chen is a highly experienced CASp who has conducted countless miles of PRow ADA Title II Transition Plan and Self-Evaluation accessibility surveys for cities, counties and universities up and down California. I asked Mr. Chen, whom I consider a friend, to be straightforward with his opinion on the curb ramp placement and alternatives. I told him that I did not want to pursue a frivolous appeal, and that I would withdraw this appeal if he agreed with SFPW's conclusion on proposed curb ramp placement.

When shown SFPW's proposed curb ramp placement, Mr. Chen's response was, and I paraphrase only a little, this was the "dumbest possible location" for a curb ramp at this intersection. Specifically, because this proposed curb ramp would sit at the crest of a fairly steeply graded sidewalk, someone in a wheelchair ascending this curb ramp would face the imminent possibility of rolling down the hill. While on site, a neighbor noted that someone's stroller had in fact rolled down the hill at this spot. For reference, here is a

photo showing the outline of the proposed curb ramp - straight thru the tree - and the slope immediately to the north/left of the proposed location:



Mr. Chen identified three alternatives, each of which was not only viable, but also safer.

#### Alternative Crosswalk/ Curb Ramp Locations

**Option A:** a curb ramp on Rhode Island across from the bus stop. As proposed, a person getting off the bus would have to cross north on 19th to get to the curb-ramped crosswalk to cross east on Rhode Island. This creates an additional burden on a person with a disability. By having the crosswalk and curb ramp at the bus stop, the pedestrian not only avoids this burden, but the bus could wait for the pedestrian to cross in front of it, blocking southbound traffic and increasing the odds of safe passage<sup>5</sup>. Additionally, this potential location has a flat sidewalk to the north, avoiding the issue of dangerous slopes at the curb ramp; and people with wheelchairs or walkers may rest before moving on.

**Option B:** a raised crosswalk slightly south of the current location. As proposed, the crosswalk jogs diagonally to the north to run directly into the Sycamore tree, and

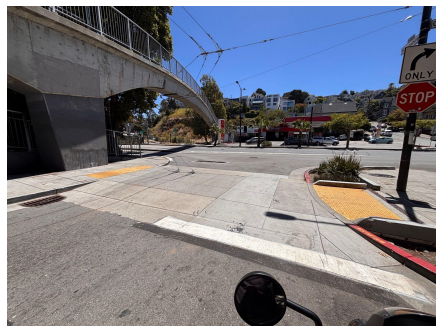
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<sup>5</sup> Similar to how a school bus protects children crossing the street after debarking.

adjacent to a downward sloping crest. For reference, this photo shows a car traveling north at the proposed location of the crosswalk and curb ramp:



A raised crosswalk could go directly across from curb to curb, and eliminate the need to remove the tree. A raised crosswalk would also: allow SFPW to control the crosswalk's cross-slope; increase pedestrian visibility for southbound traffic - especially those in a wheelchair/seated position; and act as a de facto speedbump. For reference, here is an example of a raised crosswalk at Hampshire / Cesar Chavez:



Per the SFMTA's website, "Similar to speed humps, these traffic calming treatments encourage drivers to slow down and yield to other road users at intersections. By

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<sup>6</sup> Pic for demonstrative purposes only. For info on SF's raised crosswalks please see: <https://www.sfmta.com/getting-around/walk/pedestrian-improvements-toolkit/raised-crosswalks>

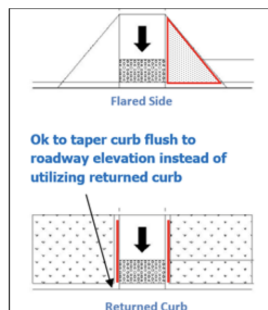
creating a physical differentiation point between the rest of the road and a crosswalk at intersections, raised crosswalks alert drivers to the need to move at a safe speed.”<sup>7</sup>

Additionally, this traffic-calming raised crosswalk would visibly signal a crosswalk, and decrease potential injury to someone stepping out from behind parked vehicles. Here is a photo of vehicles that obscure the proposed crosswalk / curb ramp:



In this view, the proposed crosswalk / curb ramp is obscured by a large box truck.

**Option C:** Move the curb ramp slightly south of the tree and use a returned curb design (rather than space-consuming curb ramp flares). A simple tape measurement showed the required 48” wide (+) clearance between the tree well and the adjacent driveway. Here is a graphic explaining flared vs. returned curbs.



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<sup>7</sup> *Id.*

Per ADA.gov, “A curb ramp may have returned curbs if it has non-walking surfaces (such as grass) or obstructions on both sides because these conditions would normally discourage pedestrians from walking across the ramp.” A tree to one side and a driveway to the other would seem to fit this instruction and warrant returned curbs.

All of these options would avoid the permanent removal of a healthy tree.

### Records Request

On June 23rd, I submitted a records request to SFPW seeking “All records related to the proposed removal in the [underlying decision] included, but not limited to: emails, Teams messages, in/formal memoranda, plans, diagrams, notes, etc..”<sup>8</sup> On July 6th, SFPW closed my request stating it had provided all responsive requests.<sup>9</sup> I have assembled a timeline (the “Timeline”) based on those records, see Exhibit 1.<sup>10</sup>

### Public Works’ 792 Day Timeline

The Timeline shows that the SFPW Project Team Leader, Au Bui, first contacted BUF on April 4, 2024. On April 5th, BUF Inspector Sara Stacy responded, stating:

*“Public Works would need to submit a tree removal application and go through the public appeals process. You would need to submit a site plan as well. I need to ask why the curb ramp needs shifted {sic} to this location; the project is going to have to demonstrate a very strong reason why a mature healthy tree needs to be removed in order to construct this curb ramp when there is already an existing one. We have many tree advocates in the City and they will absolutely object to this removal. So*

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<sup>8</sup> <https://sanfrancisco.nextrequest.com/requests/26-5647>

<sup>9</sup> *Id.*

<sup>10</sup> For ease of reference, I am also including a link to my google folder where all of the responsive documents are uploaded and available for easy viewing:  record request docs

*we need to understand what alternatives are possible and if there is a better solution that preserves green infrastructure.”<sup>11</sup>*

Later that day, Ms. Stacy added:

“I forgot to additional {sic} state that the project - Public Works, would be responsible for replacing that tree *with equivalent value or diameter*. BUF would appraise the tree using guidelines and industry best practices, *so if the tree is approved for removal a replacement location needs to be found and the project will pay the difference between the appraised value and the cost of a new street tree, \$2,431.00.*

The project needs to take all this into consideration for writing the contract/ scoping costs. Please keep in mind a tree removal process may take 3-6 months for approval because of the Public Works Hearing and any Board of Appeals.”<sup>12</sup>

No records were provided showing that Au Bui ever responded to Ms. Stacy’s email.

One year and nine months later, on November 5, 2025, SFPW’s contractor emailed SFPW asking about the tree removal. This seems to have prompted the Project Team on this issue, because between November 5 and November 13, there is a short flurry of emails both inside the Project Team and to BUF.

On November 13, 2025, 587 days after Ms. Stacy informed the SFPW that they needed to submit a removal application, an application was submitted (with no plans). On November 14, 2025, BUF Inspector Allegra Mautner assigned the matter to Inspector Cadhan Sullivan, and reminded Au Bui that plans were required to be submitted. There is no evidence that Au Bui ever submitted these plans.

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<sup>11</sup> Emphasis added.

<sup>12</sup> Emphasis added.

On December 17, 2025, BUF Acting Urban Forester and Inspector Susan Nawbary asked the Project Team, again, whether alternatives to this curb ramp location were considered. Project Manager James Yee deferred to Au Bui. 78 days later, Au Bui responded, “This is the only alternative to provide accessibility and pedestrian safe crossing across Rhode Island.” When Inspector Nawbary pressed Au Bui on this, he responded simply “This is coming from Kevin Jensen’s office. I have consulted with him.” Kevin Jensen is SFPW’s ADA Coordinator. No records were provided showing Au Bui’s communications with Mr. Jensen, that Mr. Jensen evaluated alternatives, or that Mr. Jensen conducted a site visit.

While Inspector Nawbary attempted to elicit an evaluation of alternative locations, the SFPW project team asked to have a *second* tree removed at the same location, this time for sewer work. SFPW withdrew this request when they realized that the contractor had already performed the sewer work without need for the tree to be removed.

On March 24, 2026, BUF denied SFPW’s removal application because the tree is healthy and sustainable, and the team still needed to explain why tree removal was necessary and no other alternatives were available.

Au Bui appealed the same day stating, in full:

“Adding curb ramps is required currently so the existing crossings are made accessible to persons with disabilities, in accordance with mandatory federal, state, and local accessibility statutes and regulations.

The installation and/or upgrade of curb ramps are required at pedestrian street crossings (crosswalks) when certain alterations are undertaken to the

public-right-of-way. One such type of alteration is the repaving of streets, such as this project is undertaking. As noted, providing curb ramps at street crossings is an alteration project is mandated by law.

The tree in question, sycamore tree, is in direct conflict with constructing new curb ramp to provide accessibility for reasons stated above.”

Between March 30th and April 8th, the SFPW sent no less than five emails asking about the hearing, including a request that it be expedited. BUF set the matter for hearing on April 15th. At the hearing, Kevin Jensen, who is not listed as a CASp on the DSA website, testified that this was the only viable location for this curb ramp, and that adding a stop sign was SFMTA’s responsibility, not SFPW’s.

Throughout the Timeline, BUF repeatedly reminded the Project Team of the time needed for this application to process. BUF also reminded the SFPW team that they “would be responsible for replacing that tree with equivalent value or diameter” and that “BUF would appraise the tree using guidelines and industry best practices” that SFPW would need to find “a replacement location” and that the project would have to “pay the difference between the appraised value and the cost of a new street tree”

None of this is contained in the decision which states only: “Replacement will be relocated elsewhere on the block or added to deferred replacement report if replacement location is not found within 120 days.”<sup>13</sup>

The day of the hearing, SFPW emailed BUF asking about the result. These are the

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<sup>13</sup> In 2025, BUF’s now-retired Urban Forester, Chris Buck, admitted before the Sunshine Ordinance Task Force that it does not maintain a deferred replacement report, even though this is mandated by Public Works Code Article 16 Section 806(a)(6).

only communication records provided for the period after the hearing but before the decision. This means that no records were provided showing that SFPW provided BUF proof that it had considered alternatives, which was a basis for BUF's original denial.

#### IV. ARGUMENT

The timeline and records provided by SFPW speak for themselves: 1) the SFPW project team was repeatedly asked about alternatives; 2) they had more than 2 years to consider and document these; and 3) there is no evidence alternatives were considered.

The U.S. Access Board's website provides extensive guidance on accessibility triggered by alterations to the public right of way (PRoW) as here<sup>14</sup>. Alterations differ from new construction because you must work within the constraints of *an existing environment*. Even the U.S. Access Board's "Planning and Design for Alterations: PROWAAC Special Report" notes one such site constraint as "Mature trees cannot be moved and will die if adjacent grade is raised or lowered or root growth is affected by construction."<sup>15</sup> Chapter 3 of this report states, "In an alteration, a balance needs to be struck between pedestrian and vehicle users vying for travel space (and time) within a limited right-of-way already constrained by existing development."<sup>16</sup> This Chapter goes on to say "the planning team will identify possible constraints that may affect roadway, pedestrian, and accessibility objectives. *Several design schemes may have to be developed and analyzed before the project scope can be fully determined. The designer*

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<sup>14</sup> "The installation of a single curb ramp at an existing intersection is an alteration with limited scope for correcting adjacent inaccessible conditions."

<https://www.access-board.gov/prowag/proposed/planning-and-design-for-alterations/chapter2/>

<sup>15</sup> *Id.*

<sup>16</sup> <https://www.access-board.gov/prowag/proposed/planning-and-design-for-alterations/chapter3/>

*should document the decision making process, including the evaluation that led to the selection of the preferred alternative(s)."* [Emphasis added].

This PROWAAC Report is based on the Public Right of Way Accessibility Guidelines, or PROWAG, a set of comprehensive design standards established by the U.S. Access Board to ensure that pedestrian facilities in the public right-of-way are accessible to and usable by individuals with disabilities. Notably, because there are no plans to add stop signs at this intersection, the crossing is classified as an "uncontrolled crosswalk". Under PROWAG R302.5, uncontrolled crosswalks are permitted to have a cross slope of up to 5%. The 5% cross slope allowance provides significant design flexibility. SFPW could use this tolerance to adjust the crosswalk / curb ramp location. There is no evidence in the record that SFPW evaluated how this allowance could be utilized to preserve the tree - an existing site constraint - by placing the crosswalk and curb ramp at an alternative location. There is no evidence any alternatives were considered, period.

## **V. Conclusion**

The record demonstrates a "first resort" approach to tree removal, even when it turns out: tree removal wasn't even necessary (e.g. the second tree); the proposed curb ramp location may actually be affirmatively dangerous to people with disabilities; and that viable, safer alternatives may be available. For these reasons, I respectfully request that the Department's decision be overturned and the permit denied.

Respectfully submitted

Signature: 

## Exhibit 1

### 699 Rhode Island, Tree Removal Timeline

This timeline is a summary of records and communications provided in response to my records request. You may view those records here:

<https://sanfrancisco.nextrequest.com/requests/26-5647>

For ease of reference, all responsive records are also available for viewing on my google-drive:

[https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1WMfWT-K-7GBmgxpS\\_Jvii2QtYtrZtgjD?usp=sharing](https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1WMfWT-K-7GBmgxpS_Jvii2QtYtrZtgjD?usp=sharing)

#### TIMELINE

| Date   | Sender                                    | Primary Recipient*                       | Message or Action Summary                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
|--------|-------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 4/4/24 | Au Bui,<br>SFPW<br>Project<br>Coordinator | Sara Stacy,<br>SFPW,<br>BUF<br>Inspector | We are looking to provide ADA accessibility by installing new curb ramp in front of 699 Rhode Island. We are requesting a tree to be removed, see below. Let me know if you have any questions.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| 4/5/24 | Sara Stacy                                | Au Bui                                   | <p>Public Works would need to submit a tree removal application and go through the public appeals process. You would need to submit a site plan as well.</p> <p>I need to ask why the curb ramp needs shifted to this location; the project is going to have to demonstrate a very strong reason why a mature healthy tree needs to be removed in order to construct this curb ramp when there is already an existing one. We have many tree advocates in the City and they will absolutely object to this removal. So we need to understand what alternatives are possible and if there is a better solution that preserves green infrastructure.</p> |

|             |                                  |            |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
|-------------|----------------------------------|------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|             |                                  |            | Thank you. I am generally available on Tuesdays to discuss over Teams.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| 4/5/24      | Sara Stacy                       | Au Bui     | <p>I forgot to additional state that the project - Public Works, would be responsible for replacing that tree with equivalent value or diameter. BUF would appraise the tree using guidelines and industry best practices, so if the tree is approved for removal a replacement location needs to be found and the project will pay the difference between the appraised value and the cost of a new street tree, \$2,431.00.</p> <p>The project needs to take all this into consideration for writing the contract/ scoping costs.</p> <p>Please keep in mind a tree removal process may take 3-6 months for approval because of the Public Works Hearing and any Board of Appeals.</p> |
| 4/5/24      | Au Bui                           | Sara Stacy | Thanks, Sara, for your input.I will discuss with Ed.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| <b>NOTE</b> |                                  |            | <b>No documentation regarding an appraisal or replacement location was provided in response to records request (or in the decision).</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| 9/12/24     | Ed Lui<br>SFPW                   | Sara Stacy | “Hi Stacy” (Note: this is the sum total of info provided regarding this communication)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| 11/5/25     | Gary<br>Minihane<br>(Contractor) | James Yee  | <p>Hi James,</p> <p>There’s a tree that needs to be removed per plan page CR-04. I wanted to check on the process for this, as it’s been a while since I’ve coordinated one. We can discuss it further at the precon next week, but I wanted</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |

|         |                                   |                                          |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
|---------|-----------------------------------|------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|         |                                   |                                          | to bring it up now since I know this can take some time to arrange                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| 11/6/25 | James Yee                         | Gary Minihane                            | Hi Gary,<br>Regarding the tree removal called out on drawing CR-4, I sent an email to Bureau of Urban Forestry (BUF) asking for the process of the tree removal at 699 Rhode Island St for the curb ramp. I will also add it to the Agenda under Open Discussion in the Pre Con meeting next week.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| 11/6/25 | James Yee, SFPW, Project Delivery | Au Bui                                   | Per our conversation, I am forwarding the contact that I had with Bryan Ong with BUF asking about the tree removal. I have also attached the email that I received back from Bryan where he responded that it typically takes about 6 months from submitting the application to receiving the permit.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| 11/6/25 | James Yee                         | Susan Nawbary, Bryan Ong (BUF Inspector) | <p>For the 2352I VL 79 project, the curb ramp drawing, CR-4 calls out to have a tree to be removed to construct a curb ramp in front of 699 Rhode Island St at the NE portion of the T intersection of 19th St and Rhode Island St. See the first image below with the highlighted note to remove the tree. I also included a Google street view for the tree that needs to be removed to construct the curb ramp in the second image below in front of 699 Rhode Island St.</p> <p>This project has the NTP on 10/27/25, so still early on construction phase where we don't have the contractor's construction schedule yet. I know that it may be a long process to remove a tree, so I wanted to bring it to the attention of BUF early in the construction phase so I can get a rough timeline for the</p> |

|            |                                     |                            |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
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|            |                                     |                            | tree removal process. I have also attached a copy of the CR-4 drawing as well.                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| 11/13/25   | Robin Park, SFPW, Project Delivery  | Au Bui, James Yee          | Can we look into this quickly? This is the location the contractor had planned on starting at.<br>Please let me know if we need to discuss in a meeting?                                                                                                                                           |
| 11/13/25   | James Yee                           | Au Bui, Robin Park         | Hi Au,<br>Here are the pictures that I took at 699 Rhode Island of the tree, house construction and the location of the proposed curb ramp.                                                                                                                                                        |
| 11/13/2025 | Au Bui                              |                            | Tree Removal Application is Filed                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| 11/14/25   | Allegra Mautner, SFPW/BUF Inspector | Au Bui                     | Hello Au,<br>@Sullivan, Cadhan (DPW) will log your application. We will also need the plans submitted with the application.                                                                                                                                                                        |
| 11/20/25   | James Yee                           | Gary Minihane (Contractor) | Hi Gary,<br>The removal process of the tree near 19th St and Rhode island St may take a few months depending on several factors. Because of the length of time it takes to remove this tree, please shift the work associated with Rhode island St work further down in the construction schedule. |
| 12/3/2025  | James Yee                           | Gary Minihane              | Have MOS go ahead with the sewer work on Rhode Island and shift the flatwork until the resolution of tree / curb ramp. Do you have a date of MOS will start the sewer work at Rhode Island location?                                                                                               |
| 12/17/25   | Susan Nawbary                       | James Yee                  | Hi James Have you submitted a removal application yet? Were there alternatives considered? If the project believes there are no options other than removal we will need to appraise the full value of the tree. The invoice for the application and the in-lieu fee would need to be paid by JE    |

|          |                 |                         |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
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| 12/18/25 | James Yee       | Susan Nawbary & Au Bui  | Hi Susan,<br>For the tree at Rhode Island and 19th St, Au Bui has submitted the removal application and would be more knowledge of the alternatives that were considered during the design phase and can provide additional input.                              |
| 12/31/25 |                 |                         | According to records provided, this is the last time the Site Drawings were modified.                                                                                                                                                                           |
| 3/6/26   | Gary Minihane   | James Yee               | Hi James,<br>What is the latest on this tree? We plan to start the curb ramp work here late next week.                                                                                                                                                          |
| 3/6/26   | Au Bui          | Susan Nawbary           | Hi Susan,<br>Can you provide update on the tree removal approval? This is the only alternative to provide accessibility and pedestrian safe crossing across Rhode Island.                                                                                       |
| 3/9/26   | Susan Nawbary   | Cadhan Sullivan, Au Bui | @Sullivan, Cadhan (DPW) as the assigned inspector, please provide Au with a timely response.                                                                                                                                                                    |
| 3/9/26   | Susan Nawbary   | Au Bui, Timothy Shu     | Looping in @Shu, Timothy (DPW)<br>@Sullivan, Cadhan (DPW) please make sure you respond to Au today.                                                                                                                                                             |
| 3/9/26   | Timothy Shu     | Susan Nawbary           | Hi BUF team,<br>We're going to add a second tree to this application in addition to the curb ramp tree. 697 Rhode Island also has a tree in conflict with a lateral we need to replace.                                                                         |
| 3/9/26   | Cadhan Sullivan | Timothy Shu             | On Wednesday 3/11 I will have an assessment done and either have the tree(s) posted for removal or send out my formal denial Letter. The denial letter will allow 30 days to be appealed and escalated to a hearing. If the trees are approved for removal they |

|         |                        |                                |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
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|         |                        |                                | will be posted for either 1, 15, or 30 days for a protesting period.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| 3/10/26 | Susan Nawbary          | Cadhan Sullivan                | Thank you! Before you deny, can you please reach out to Au? This could require a site visit.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| 3/16/26 | Gary Minihane          | James Yee                      | Hi James,<br>Can you confirm that no changes will be made to CR-04? We would like to at least start on the N/W corner and sidewalk and curb on the East side?                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| 3/16/26 | Unknown (not provided) | Gary Minihane                  | Hi James/Gary,<br>There are no changes. On the (Note: text ends here on provided records)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| 3/17/26 | James Yee              | Susan Nawbary, Cadhan Sullivan | Hi Susan,<br>The larger tree no longer needs to be removed. We initially thought the roots of the larger tree will be impacted with the replacement of the sewer lateral, but that sewer lateral was completed without impact to those roots of the larger tree. The smaller tree still needs to be removed in order to the construction the proposed curb ramp. |
| 3/17/26 | Susan Nawbary          | James Yee                      | Hi James, I think you and @Sullivan, Cadhan (DPW) should meet to discuss the curb ramp tree. @Sullivan, Cadhan (DPW) please call James tomorrow.                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| 3/20/26 | James Yee              | Cadhan Sullivan                | Hi Cadhan,<br>What is your availability for a MS Team call with Au Bui and me?                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| 3/20/26 | Cadhan Sullivan        | James Yee                      | I can take a call at any time on Tuesdays and Fridays. Now would be fine as well but also anytime during my counter hours in my signature below.                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| 3/20/26 | James Yee              | Cadhan Sullivan                | Hi Cadhan,<br>Au Bui isn't in the office today, so today isn't good. I will discuss with Au on Monday to see what time Tuesday will work for him.                                                                                                                                                                                                                |

|         |                 |                 |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
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| 3/24/26 | James Yee       | Cadhan Sullivan | Hi Cadhan,<br>I will setup a MS Team meeting for Tuesday at 1:30pm to discuss the status of the smaller tree in front of 699 Rhode Island St.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| 3/24/26 | Susan Nawbary   | Au Bui          | Hi Au, is there a documented demand at this location for an individual(s) with needs? A traffic study of pedestrian usage requiring the curb ramp? If not, is it possible to move the curb ramp to an area of high need, like Cortland where they've been asking for one?? Do you think Kevin Jensen would make such a waiver?                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| 3/24/26 | Au Bui          | Susan Nawbary   | Hi Susan,<br>This is coming from Kevin Jensen's office. I have consulted with him.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| 3/24/26 | Cadhan Sullivan |                 | Removal denial letter issued. (Not provided in records request.) From Mr. Sullivan's email: "Official denial letter for this project. Let me know the formal appealing reason and I will add this to the hearing tracker."                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| 3/24/26 | Au Bui          | Cadhan Sullivan | <p>Thank you, Cadhan. Adding curb ramps is required currently so the existing crossings are made accessible to persons with disabilities, in accordance with mandatory federal, state, and local accessibility statutes and regulations.</p> <p>The installation and/or upgrade of curb ramps are required at pedestrian street crossings (crosswalks) when certain alterations are undertaken to the public-right-of-way. One such type of alteration is the repaving of streets, such as this project is undertaking. As noted, providing curb ramps at street crossings is an alteration project is mandated by law.</p> <p>The tree in question, sycamore tree, is in direct conflict with constructing new curb ramp to provide accessibility for reasons stated above.</p> |
| 3/26/26 | James Yee       | Au Bui          | Hi Au,                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |

|         |                       |                                                 |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
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|         |                       |                                                 | <p>I wanted to pass along an incident that happened yesterday with the resident at 699 Rhode Island came out of the house and incidentally walked on the freshly poured concrete sidewalk (where the old curb ramp was removed). He also tried a few other things to damage the sidewalk.</p> <p>We told the contractor to make the site safe and depart from the site. The resident may escalate when further work with the tree removal and curb ramp installation. Are you available to MS Team chat with us on this?</p>                                                                                                                                                                  |
| 3/26/26 | Timothy Yee           | Au Bui                                          | <p>Hi Au,</p> <p>Thanks for speaking to James earlier about this incident. To clarify, this was the sidewalk work fronting 699 Rhode Island (contrary to the subject line). Given the issue with the resident, and the damage they caused to the fresh sidewalk, we will try to coordinate a uniformed police officer at the site when curb ramp work and tree removal is being performed and will have the PIO reach out to the constituent again. If the design team has determined that this location, fronting 699 Rhode Island, is the only feasible location for this ramp/crosswalk, CM team will proceed as planned. If the resident escalates this matter, we will let you know.</p> |
| 3/30/26 | Tiffany Justice, SFPW | Kevin Feng, SFPW                                | <p>Hi Kevin,</p> <p>PA has reached out to the inspector for BUF to see if we can get this expedited. BUF is looking into possibly getting the hearing scheduled for this week.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| 3/30/26 | Cadhan Sullivan       | Seemingly the entire SFPW project delivery team | <p>It won't be for this week because the hearing notice still needs to get posted on the trees for at least one week with the hearing information available to the public. I am adding it to our tracker now and will see about having the trees ready for the next hearing available later this month. We will reach out once it is scheduled.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |

|                       |                  |                 |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
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| 3/30/26               | Timothy Shu      | Cadhan Sullivan | Hi Cadhan,<br>When will you be posting on the tree?                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| 3/30/26               | Kevin Feng       | Susan Nawbary   | Hi Susan & Cadhan,<br>Do you have any updates on the status of tree posting and hearing?                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| 4/3/26                | Kevin Feng, SFPW | Cadhan Sullivan | Hi Cadhan,<br>Do you have any updates on the tree posting?                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| 4/8/26                | James Yee        | Susan Nawbary   | Do you have any updates on the tree posting?                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| 4/8/26                | Susan Nawbary    | James Yee       | Hi All, the hearing will occur at 10am on 4/15.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| 4/15/26               |                  |                 | Tree Removal Hearing Takes Place                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| 4/15/26               |                  |                 | Tree Removal Hearing Cover Sheet indicates that tree was denied for removal because: tree is healthy and sustainable; construction required needs to explain why tree removal is necessary for a curb ramp to be placed in this specific location with no alternatives available such as a bulb out curb or other modifications to plans. |
| 4/15/26               | James Yee        | Susan Nawbary   | Hi Susan / Cadhan,<br>I wanted to see what the results of the hearing that took place this morning for the tree at 699 Rhode Island St.                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| 4/15/26               | Susan Nawbary    | James Yee       | Hi James! The hearing officer has 5 days to produce a decision, but often it's faster.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| 6/5/26                |                  |                 | Decision issues. Reason for approving removal is: Approve removal without replacement in accordance with Article 16 code requirements. Replacement will be relocated elsewhere on the block or added to deferred replacement report if replacement location is not found within 120 days.                                                 |
| <b>LENGTH OF SFPW</b> |                  |                 | <b>792 DAYS.</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |

|                                      |  |  |  |
|--------------------------------------|--|--|--|
| <b>INTERNAL TREE REMOVAL PROCESS</b> |  |  |  |
|--------------------------------------|--|--|--|

\* All emails included other project-relevant recipients. This timeline leaves many out not to infer the City's communication gaps, but just to keep things brief.

BRIEF SUBMITTED BY BUF



**Charlie Murphy, Assistant Superintendent** | Bureau of Urban Forestry  
charlie.murphy@sfdpw.org | T. 415.695.2103 | 2323 Cesar Chavez St. San Francisco, CA 94124

Appeal No. 26-033, 699 Rhode Island Street  
Hearing Date: August 26, 2026

The Bureau of Urban Forestry's initial stance was to retain the tree in question, as the bureau's belief was that a redesign could possibly save the tree. Through the appeal process, the Department of Public Works heard the case and determined there was no feasible alternative. Thus, leading to the Department's approval of the appeal, reversing Bureau of Urban Forestry's initial decision. While the Bureau of Urban Forestry never wants to see the loss of a healthy tree, Urban Forestry supports the Department of Public Works' efforts to make San Francisco a safe and inclusive place for everyone. The Bureau of Urban Forestry relies on the Department's experts' decisions when it comes to making sure the City follows federal and state mandates of the Americans with Disabilities Act.

# PUBLIC COMMENT

**From:** [McDavid Stoddard](#)  
**To:** [BoardofAppeals \(PAB\)](#)  
**Subject:** Subject: Public Comment - Appeal No. 26-033 (699 Rhode Island Street) - Opposition to Tree Removal  
**Date:** Tuesday, August 11, 2026 8:38:05 PM

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This message is from outside the City email system. Do not open links or attachments from untrusted sources.

To the Board of Appeals,

I am writing regarding Appeal No. 26-033, concerning the property at 699 Rhode Island Street and Public Works Order No. 300079, which approved removal of a Sycamore street tree.

I live within the notification area for this property and want to register my opposition to the removal. The notice itself describes the tree as healthy and in fair condition, and it is a large, mature tree that provides meaningful shade and canopy to the block. Removing an established tree of this size represents a real loss to the neighborhood that a young replacement tree will take many years, if not decades, to replace - and the notice does not guarantee a replacement will even be planted nearby, only that one "will be relocated elsewhere on the block or added to a deferred replacement report" if no location is found within 120 days.

I understand the stated justification is to allow construction of an ADA-compliant curb ramp. I support ADA accessibility improvements, but I would ask the Board to consider whether a design exists that preserves the tree while still achieving compliant access - for example, adjusting the ramp's alignment or dimensions - before approving removal of a healthy tree.

I would appreciate it if this letter could be included in the materials provided to Board members ahead of the August 26, 2026 hearing.

Thank you for your consideration.

Robert  
655 Kansas st

**From:** [REDACTED]  
**To:** [REDACTED]  
**Cc:** [REDACTED]  
**Subject:** Appeal #26-033: Letter of support for pedestrian ramp  
**Date:** Wednesday, August 19, 2026 12:18:52 PM

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This message is from outside the City email system. Do not open links or attachments from untrusted sources.

Dear Board of Appeals,

I'm writing to provide support for Public Works Order #300079 to build pedestrian ramps on the NE corner of 19th and Rhode Island Street and in front of 699 Rhode Island Street.

I live nearby and noticed that there have been more cars going through this intersection (often quite fast downhill) in recent years. As such, the pedestrian ramps on ALL corners are needed to increase safety, particularly for the elderly and disabled. In fact, stop signs should also be installed to prevent accidents and fatalities in this intersection. I believe it is just a matter of time. Currently, there are already stop signs, pedestrian ramps, and cross walks on 18th St. / Rhode Island and 20th St. / Rhode Island but not here.

Currently, two of the bright yellow ramps have been installed on the west side of 19th St. / Rhode Island. It really makes no sense for the ramps to be on one side and not the other. Since I no longer move very fast, I feel much more at ease to be able to use the crosswalks and ramps to cross the street safely to move my car before street cleaning on Monday and Wednesday mornings.

As for the sycamore tree, there is already another gigantic tree less than 10 feet north that dwarfs this one. The Bureau of Urban Forestry has noted that a replacement tree can be planted nearby so that is a very practical decision. This will value human lives too.

Thank you kindly for your consideration.

PS. Please "hide" my email and identity info due to this letter being in the public records. Thank you.

**From:** [Dorene Cotter](#)  
**To:** [BoardofAppeals \(PAB\)](#)  
**Subject:** Appeal 26-033 (699 Rhode Island Street)  
**Date:** Wednesday, August 19, 2026 5:04:01 PM

---

This message is from outside the City email system. Do not open links or attachments from untrusted sources.

Hello:

I am a neighbor on Rhode Island and wish to offer my support for the removal of a street tree at the south end of the 699 Rhode Island Street parcel. Access to the nearby ADA curb ramp is partly blocked by the smaller of the two street trees, especially since its tree roots have led to a buckling of several sidewalk panels. This situation creates a pedestrian hazard for anyone who is within four feet of the smaller tree.

The larger of the pair of trees is 20 feet to the north -- it has a lovely canopy that enhances the streetscape. The larger tree does not pose a similar hazard and should be preserved.

Hoping this is helpful for your deliberations,

Dorene Cotter  
713 Rhode Island Street