

McLaren Trails Priority Improvements Project
Tree Work Info – FAQ
September 2024

The upcoming McLaren Trails Priority Improvements Project will transform John McLaren Park, with its important urban forest of tens of thousands of trees, into an even more vibrant and resilient green space. Rec and Park will enhance the area to develop healthier ecosystems and restore native habitats and upgrade the trail network to be more accessible and offer new opportunities for exploration. This project will also address sick and aging trees that pose safety risks to park goers.

To achieve these goals, we will be performing tree work, including pruning and removing approximately 400 of the park's tens of thousands of trees. This will be done throughout 2024 in four priority areas: Upper Reservoir, Shelley Inner Core, University Hill, and Visitacion Avenue. Rec and Park will plant more than one tree for every tree removed.

This FAQ contains responses to common questions about the tree work.

Why are trees being removed?

There are three main reasons trees are being removed as part of the McLaren Trails Priority Improvements project:

- 1. Safety:** Sick and aging trees pose safety risks, especially along trails. We're removing trees deemed hazardous by an independent arborist to ensure the well-being of park visitors.
- 2. Habitat Enhancement:** By carefully pruning and removing trees, we're fostering healthier ecosystems and restoring native habitats across the park. From increasing daylight penetration along Grey Fox Creek to thinning over-crowded eucalyptus trees at University Hill, our efforts aim to promote biodiversity and ecosystem resilience.
- 3. Trail Work:** Upgrading trails to minimize erosion and enhance natural beauty is a key focus. In addition to improving existing trails, we're creating new pathways to improve accessibility and add opportunities for exploration.

How many trees will be removed?

The project is removing approximately 400 trees across McLaren Park, which currently has tens of thousands of trees in its tree canopy. At the time of the contract award for tree work, we anticipated removing approximately 225 trees in three priority areas north of Mansell, and 75 trees along Visitacion Avenue. Final tree work counts vary based on the latest conditions in the field and available budget.

While the project scope has not changed, additional tree removals have become warranted due to changing conditions in the field. Some plants, which were too small to qualify as “trees” when they were first assessed, have now grown tall enough that their characterization has changed. These plants were always planned for removal but did not meet the size threshold to qualify as trees in the initial count.

What is the tree replacement plan?

For every tree removed, we're committed to planting more than one in return. This ensures not only the replacement of lost greenery but also a net gain in tree coverage, contributing to a greener environment for generations to come.

More than 75 trees will be planted directly by the McLaren Trails project in priority improvement areas. More than 300 additional trees will be planted within McLaren Park, and additional trees will be planted across nearby parks in southeast San Francisco to ensure a greater than 1:1 replacement for all trees removed by the project.

What is the project schedule?

The tree work will last throughout 2024, with careful coordination to protect nesting birds and roosting bats and minimize disruptions to park activities.

Trail improvements and natural features restoration will follow tree work and is expected to begin in late 2024 and continuing throughout 2025.

What about wildlife in the area?

This project will benefit the local wildlife habitat, and we're committed to protecting these habitats through project implementation. A 3rd party biologist is conducting thorough surveys to avoid disturbing nesting birds and bat roosting areas.

Will herbicides be used?

To prevent tree resprouting, we're utilizing Dow Capstone herbicide, a Tier II herbicide on [SF Environment's latest reduced-risk herbicide list](#). We are taking measures to ensure public safety during and after application.

How can I stay informed?

We're collaborating closely with park staff and the community to communicate updates, minimize disruptions, and ensure a smooth project. For the most current information, please visit: <https://bit.ly/mclarentrails>.

For questions, contact: RPDinfo@sfgov.org or call 628-652-6643