



NORMAN YEE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Tuesday, July 26, 2016

Contact: Jen Low, Legislative Aide, 415.554.6521

SUPERVISOR YEE'S STATEMENT ON TREE INITIATIVES

Taking Back the Trees Shouldn't Be This Taxing Finally, A Win for Homeowners

Thanks to the advocacy of our homeowners and organizations such as Friends for the Urban Forest-- trees have been elevated as a top City priority. One would think that with this much grassroots support, trees would be fully funded and remain off the budgetary chopping block. Yet some of my Board colleagues are still pushing for a parcel tax on property owners to pay for this.

There is no doubt that special taxes help pay for worthy causes, but at what point do we need to direct the attention of City leaders to make better financial decisions? That is why I have been reluctant to support the parcel tax proposal. Homeowners are taxed enough as it is.

Despite political pressure and posturing from my colleagues, I have stood my ground and we have prevailed in convincing them that the parcel tax for tree maintenance should not be on this ballot. Caring for trees will be paid for by new city revenues other than the parcel tax.

I have been clear from the beginning that we need to stop putting unnecessary measures on an already bloated ballot this November. Our residents are facing an affordability crisis and instead of showing budgetary restraint—especially with a \$9.6 million budget, we are asking voters, yet again, to make the tough calls that the Board of Supervisors was elected to make. So far, we are asking San Franciscans to decide on an increase to the sales tax, a tax on sugary beverages, a parcel tax renewal for City College of San Francisco, and potentially other tax measures that remain to be decided.

The only revenue measure I am supporting this year is the Luxury Real Estate Tax introduced by Supervisor Kim. The Luxury Real Estate Tax would slightly increase the transfer tax on properties exceeding \$5 million. If passed, this measure could raise \$44 million in general revenue to the City—more than enough to fund a variety of new programs, including tree maintenance--without adding more burden to homeowners.

I also introduced legislation to direct the City to take back the responsibility for tree maintenance immediately-- before the November election. Through the legislative process, I am requesting a supplemental appropriation to take over trees so we can prepare for the winter storms and start alleviating the pressure on our property owners. If the voters pass new revenues, such as the Luxury Real Estate Tax in November, the legislation will also make it a priority to use these additional funds for tree and sidewalk maintenance.

It's time for City Hall to realize that money doesn't grow on trees and that we, as elected officials, need to start taking responsibility for what the public has bestowed upon us.

Finally, there is now a win-win for homeowners who have been bearing this burden for far too long.

###