

## Street Parks

### Do it yourself medians

#### Planning

1. Talk to your neighbors, including merchants. You need to have reliable, demonstrated community support for your project. You will also need a reliable team of 3-5 people who will consistently fundraise, participate, and organize planting and maintenance for each median.
2. Contact Liz Lerma at the Department of Public Works (415-641-2627) to assess your initial concept and identify concerns. It is helpful to connect with DPW at the outset, before investing a lot of time and effort in a project. DPW has the most experience with gardening in the public right-of way; and can partner with you to build a successful project.
3. Select one person, and one alternate to be the main point of contact for your group. These two people will need to be regularly and consistently available to facilitate and coordinate the project. City agency staff assigned to these projects sometimes begin work as early as 7 A.M., or work on weekends and holidays. Consider having your group representative and alternate make available their cell phone numbers and e-mail addresses to make communicating easier.
4. Approach a landscape designer. They will either survey or ask you to survey the median you are considering greening. Make a plan drawing, to scale, that shows all existing conditions, including exact utility box locations, signs, existing trees or plants, and lighting. You will also need to measure the thickness of the curb itself, as the median width minus the curbs is the actual planting area. Note: You may not be able to remove all of the concrete on any particular median, depending on existing conditions; so prepare to be flexible.
5. Ask your landscape designer to prepare a preliminary plant list. Contact Liz Lerma at the Department of Public Works again to have your preliminary plant list considered. A DPW *Street Parks Committee* will review your plant list. DPW will provide technical assistance necessary to establish a reasonable and appropriate plant list for your location.
6. Next, have your landscape designer prepare a preliminary planting plan. Consider also consulting with the Friends of the Urban Forest (<http://www.fuf.net>) regarding their tree recommendation for your location – they may have experience in your neighborhood already. Be prepared to be flexible about the choice of plants and/or trees. Most trees and plants are inappropriate for median plantings. Your architect or landscape designer will need to consider local microclimate, soil conditions, the width of the median, the amount of automobile exhaust, visibility and other codes (e.g., no trees within 25' of any traffic signal or sign, or within 5' of any gas or water meter, adequate vehicular clearance, no plant taller than 3'), your budget and other limiting factors. DPW will assist your landscape designer with obtaining the proper codes and regulations, as necessary.
7. Contact Liz Lerma at DPW again to have your preliminary planting plan considered by the *Street Parks Committee*. Despite the best planning and design, you may find that

your preliminary plan has to change, even radically, based on actual conditions in the median – many medians have been poured over another layer of concrete roadway (sometimes even over old train tracks), and the site's soil may be completely different from what your preliminary plan anticipated. Again, be flexible.

## **Budgeting**

8. Once your Plan is approved by DPW, establish your baseline budget for construction and maintenance. Factor in the plants and/or trees your Plan calls for, replacing the existing soil under the concrete, to a depth of anywhere from 12-24", with a grade of soil appropriate to your location (your landscape designer will be able to help you with this), landscape fabric (weed block) and fabric pins (1 every 8-10 feet, with extra for curved sections), decomposed granite to a depth of 2-2.5" (for mulching around the plantings and discouraging weeds), water hookups (see the attached sample budget and notes) and ongoing maintenance costs (watering, weeding, trash collection, etc.).
9. For your Planting Day budget, try to find bright, recognizable hats for experienced gardeners willing to lead teams of volunteers – this will help volunteers figure out whom to ask for instructions. You might also include a few pairs of size small or medium ladies' gardening gloves (City loaner gloves are all men's size large), several sizes of disposable latex gloves (for trash collection or for persons with allergic reactions to certain kinds of plants), food, bottled water or other refreshments, and sanitizing hand cleaner. If you can, try to rent a portable toilet and sink unit. Consider renting or borrowing a canopy or similar structure to provide shade and keep food and refreshments out of the elements. A few folding chairs, dollies or hand trucks can be useful too.
10. Once you have a baseline budget, determine if you want to fundraise independently, or if you want to apply for grant funding. Grant resources include San Francisco Beautiful (<http://sfbeautiful.org>), and the Neighborhood Beautification Fund/Community Challenge Grant Program (<http://sfccgp.org>). Local institutions and businesses also frequently wish to participate in neighborhood activities. Local nurseries, hardware or landscaping supply stores and other suppliers may also offer you discounted materials or services in order to be included in your project. Contact your district Supervisor's office for other possible funding suggestions and possible partners. Bear all of these resources in mind as you plan your event and how or if to publicize it.

## **Organizing**

11. Once your funding is established, begin planning your planting date. This should always be in the fall in order to give plantings the rainy seasons to establish themselves before they require additional watering. Planting in the dry season is not environmentally friendly; it's hard on plants and trees, and it's unnecessarily expensive. Planting days will also have to be on a Saturday in order to minimize conflicts with automobile traffic. Be sure to coordinate closely with DPW staff. Planting days will need to be completed by 2:30 P.M. in order to fit into regular DPW staff workday schedules.
12. Obtain an estimate from your landscape designer of how many hours your plant positioning, planting, mulching, staking and clean up will take. This estimate will be your guide to how many volunteers you will need. Plan to break volunteers into groups of 4-6,

each led by an experienced gardener, or tree planter (planting trees is a different skill set, using different tools than other gardening). Make sure that you have and can distribute any special planting instructions (unusual planting depths, for instance) or precautions (some plants cause mild allergic reactions to some people's skin) to both your gardening team leaders and DPW gardeners. DPW will arrange for an appropriate number of experienced DPW gardeners to teach your volunteers how to plant using landscaping fabric, to assist with the planting, and to make sure that everyone is following appropriate safety precautions.

13. Depending on the size of your project, schedule your volunteers to come in shifts. You don't want to tire your volunteers out! You also don't want too many people to show up, only to be confused, or turned away for lack of work. Your landscape designer should be able to help you with this scheduling, in consultation with DPW. Add in a few volunteer positions to help you with trash collection, bagging, loading and unloading and general going back and forth. You may also want to find one or two people to help you sign in all of your volunteers and event participants, in order to document your planting day. These same people might also pass out information about your project or group, and answer questions from media, interested passers-by, and so on. You may also wish to find one or two people to take pictures of your planting day for future reference, and to share later on with participants.
14. Determine which tools, and how many of them, you will need. Your landscape designer and DPW will be able to help you with this too. DPW will be able to lend you some of the tools you need, including safety vests and gloves, but availability varies. Consider contacting the San Francisco Clean City Tool Lending Center (<http://sfcleancity.com/tool-lending/index.html>) at 701-TOOL, where appropriate tools are lent out, free of charge, for up to 3 days. Many volunteers may have tools of their own. Ask DPW to provide trash and garden debris liners, brooms and dustpans so your volunteers and group can do a local clean up during down times, as well as gather up refuse produced by your project. Consider borrowing a bullhorn and/or walkie-talkies to communicate with the entire group, or from one end of your project area to the other.
15. Plan to have an appropriate amount of food and refreshments, particularly water, for your volunteers. Gardening, especially tree planting, is hard work. Gardening in the middle of a street can also be quite hot. Don't let anyone get dehydrated. For related reasons, consider renting and locating a portable toilet and sink close to your project site (if you do this, borrow a padlock to lock the facility before and after your event).
16. Select a location for everyone to meet, sign in, receive instructions, eat and relax. This location should be large enough to safely accommodate all of the people you expect to participate in your planting day, including members of the press, public speakers you've invited, and people who want to cheer you on. If there is no space large enough, you may be able to have a few parking spaces vacated and cordoned off in advance for the duration of your event. This requires adequate public notice, and can be arranged through DPW, SFPD or DPT.
17. You may wish to structure your planting day so that mealtime or snack time coincides with a celebration or public speaking opportunity. Food and refreshments can act as a natural way to gather people together, at which time they can be entertained or engaged in additional activities. Your district Supervisor, Police Captain or other community leaders will appreciate being invited to your event, and welcome an opportunity to

address everyone. You may also wish to use this time to thank key people, city agencies, companies or contributors who have been instrumental in bringing your project to life.

18. DPW will work with you to establish the day's schedule. It will take DPW some time to cone off lanes of traffic, as necessary, to work with you to unload and set up tools and supplies, and to cover the medians with landscape fabric. Make sure that a few reliable volunteers in your group are available during this time to work with DPW, help set up tools and coordinate supplies. Keep these volunteers separately tasked from the volunteers you will need to run your refreshments, volunteer coordination, sign-in, information desk, and so on. Try to keep your two main project leads free from specific tasks so that they can move freely between tasks, coordinate and make decisions as necessary. Expect the unexpected!

## **Planting/Construction**

19. Plan to place the plants early, according to your planting plan, well before volunteers are expected to begin planting. Because of their nature, median planting days operate on a tight schedule.
20. Start your planting day with a short period for people to socialize, sign in and familiarize themselves with the location and surrounding intersections. Some of your volunteers may not be familiar with the area or traffic patterns. Consider making an opening announcement that welcomes people and gives them useful safety precautions, as well as initial instructions about where to find team leaders, tools and safety equipment. If you find that you have more volunteers than you were counting on, encourage extra hands to grab gloves and trash liners and help do a local clean up. There's no sense in making a median look beautiful and green if it's surrounded by street tree wells full of trash and weeds. Use this time and protection from weekday traffic volumes to give the whole surrounding area a small facelift.
21. Have fun!

## **Maintenance**

22. Remember, on a calm residential street, you need a reliable team of neighbors and interested parties to regularly weed, water, pick up trash and keep an informed eye on your plantings. Have a procedure for what to do when a tree is knocked down or a branch breaks. Have a DPW *Street Parks Committee* - approved maintenance plan for how to assess and/or replace damaged or diseased plants, add mulch, and so on. Finally, a garbage-strewn, planted median can be as much or more of an eyesore as concrete. Don't let your investment go to waste.
23. Landscaped medians require a higher level of maintenance than concrete. Depending on the location, level of organization and local support, your project may provide this maintenance through volunteers or hired professionals. Landscapes require regular weeding and watering (until plants are established), ongoing litter pickup, pruning, occasional replacement of plants, and mulch. While any single project may require minimal care, as green medians increase citywide, city crews cannot support maintenance requirements with current funding levels.

**Sample Project Budget**  
**Street Parks: Guerrero Medians**  
**(between C. Chavez and Duncan + C. Chavez island @ Guerrero)**

Type	Description	Quantity	Retail Price
Design	Guerrero Street Gardens Design Fee	8 hours	\$800
Demolition	DPW: concrete removal and overhead	3 DAYS	\$14,365
Hauling	DPW: concrete and soil dump fee	120 cubic yards	\$2,000
Soil	Sandy Loam	110 cubic yards	\$3,461
Delivery	Sandy loam delivery charge (\$85 per 10 cubic yard trip)	110 cubic yards	\$1,014
Mulch	Gold Path Fines (Decomposed Granite)	10 cubic yards	\$694
Delivery	DG delivery charge (\$85 per 10 cubic yard trip)	10	\$92
Tree	24' boxed Olea europaea 'Swan Hill Olive'	7	\$3,380
Tree	24" boxed Tracycarpus Wagnerianus (Miniature Chusan Palm)	6	\$1,411
Plant	5-Gallon Agave huachuensis	10	\$616
Plant	5-Gallon Agave medio-picta alba	10	\$616
Plant	1-Gallon Dyckia remotiflora	4	\$93
Plant	1-Gallon Dyckia hybrid	1	\$20
Plant	1-Gallon Aloe 'Johnsons hybrid'	26	\$100
Plant	1-Gallon Agave parisana	1	\$20
Plant	1-Gallon Euphorbia myrsinites	48	\$760
Plant	1-Gallon Leucadendron s 'Red Tulip'	20	\$432
Plant	1-Gallon Libertia peregrinans	30	\$498
Plant	6" Sedum 'Blue Carpet'	30	\$598
Plant	Various 4" succulents/cacti (sedum, cotyledon, aeonium)	159	\$1,577
Plant	5-Gallon Adenanthos drummondii	3	\$175
Shrub	6" Cussonia spicata	10	\$116
Supplies	Landscape fabric (weed block)	500 feet of 4' rolls	\$390
Supplies	Landscape fabric staples	3 boxes	\$29
Supplies	Small and medium garden gloves	6 pair	\$3
Supplies	Latex gloves	1 box	\$14
Rental	PortoSan (portable toilet) with sink unit	1	\$150
Supplies	Team leader baseball hats	10	\$23
Food & Bev	Breakfast, lunch, coffee, beverages & snacks for 100 volunteers	multiple	\$483
Plumbing	PUC: Water meters *	3	\$12,903
Plumbing	DPW: Hosebibs	3	\$1,500
Plumbing	DPW: Cement work at hosebibs	3	\$270
<b>Approximate total Square footage</b>		<b>1703</b>	
<b>Total Cost</b>			<b>\$48,117</b>

**Approximate cost per square foot      \$28**  
**Approximate linear footage              500**

* Water-Plumbing Cost variables			
	Water meters (when there is none at the location)	1	\$4,301
	Water meter resets (when there is a meter)	1	\$742
	Hosebibs (faucets) <sup>1</sup>	1	\$500
	Cement work (at hosebibs)	1	\$90
<sup>1</sup> Irrigation systems (automated) require considerable additional expense.			

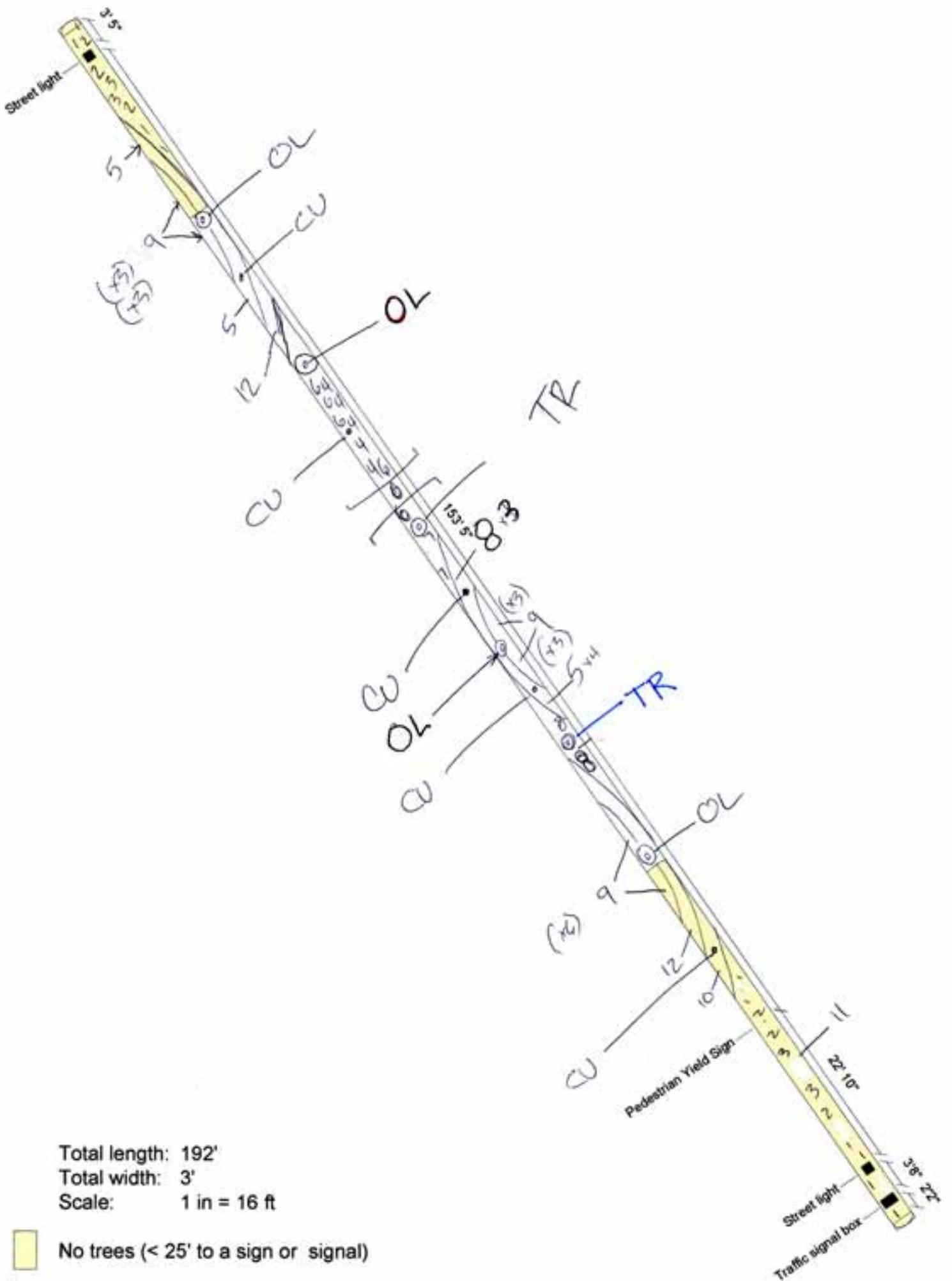
for more information, see <http://www.sanjoseguerrero.com>, or call 415.285.8188

## Guerrero Medians Draft Plant List

design by Flora Grubb, Flora Grubb Gardens

<http://www.guerrerostreetgardens.com> 415.648.2670

<b>Code</b>	<b>Type</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Quantity</b>
<b>OL</b>	Tree	Olea europaea 'swan hill'	7
<b>TR</b>	Tree	Trachycarpus wagnerianus	6
<b>3</b>	Agave	Agave alba media picta	10
<b>2</b>	Agave	Agave huachuensis	10
<b>1</b>	Agave	Agave parisana	21
<b>4</b>	Succulent	Aeonium 'Cyclops'	16
<b>5</b>	Succulent	Cotyledon orbiculata	20
<b>6</b>	Succulent	Aloe 'Johnsons hybrid'	31
<b>7</b>	Shrub	Adenantos drummondii	3
<b>8</b>	Shrub	Leucadendron 'Red Tulip'	20
<b>CU</b>	Shrub	Cussonia spicata	10
<b>9</b>	Grass-like	Libertia peregrinans	30
<b>10</b>	Groundcover	Euphorbia myrsinites	48
<b>11</b>	Groundcover	Sedum 'Blue Carpet'	30
<b>12</b>	Groundcover	Sedum 'Dragons Blood'	48



Total length: 192'  
 Total width: 3'  
 Scale: 1 in = 16 ft

No trees (< 25' to a sign or signal)