

Lower Haight Local

The Local Magazine of Lower Haight, SF

Issue 7: The Tree Edition | March 2026



COVER ART: Korin Thompson

PAGE 1

Third Wheel Coffee

An exciting new update from a beloved coffee shop

PAGE 2

Birthday Trees

An homage to the history of San Francisco's many street trees

PAGE 3

Waller trees

Events surrounding the delayed removal of Waller's ficus trees

PAGE 4

Held by the Trees

Capturing the essence of Lower Haight's trees in a single poem

PAGE 5

Haight of Flavor

Local seasonal produce feature for March + a cookie recipe

PAGE 6

"Lessons in Growing Tall" & Featured February Events

Note From The Editor

Joel Reske, Editor-in-Chief

Hello neighbor! You are holding the sixth issue of Lower Haight Local, a local newsletter / zine for all of the amazing people and things happening in Lower Haight. This magazine is the direct product of your neighbors' writing, doodling, and designing. Some fun updates:

1. Last month, we had our first **distribution party**, where we served free pancakes and coffee to anyone walking by. It was quite a celebration, and we passed out **700 zines**.
2. March will be the first issue with our new leadership team helping to put the magazine together! This is a **huge** help, and I'm excited to see what we'll do together.
3. Our art night had 30+ people, every table full! We will have plenty of spots next time - we would love to see you there. Follow us on Instagram to make sure you hear about it.

As always, this is your paper. Get involved and help make it what you want!

To stay up to date, follow us on Instagram **@lowerhaightlocal**

To support us financially (we need it!), go to **lowerhaightlocal.com/donate**

To help write/edit/anything, go to **lowerhaightlocal.com/help**

Anything here you want to see in the zine / respond to? **Email hi@lowerhaightlocal.com**



lowerhaightlocal.com

Third Wheel Coffee

by Rachel Wong

Before Third Wheel Coffee ever served its first latte, **Tom** and **Vida** were just two baristas working side by side at Noe Café, unaware they had grown up only a few blocks from each other in San Francisco. Years later, that chance connection would become the foundation of one of the city's most beloved neighborhood coffee businesses.

Third Wheel officially launched on **April 20, 2020**, as an electric coffee tricycle. The custom-built cart, powered by a car battery and funded entirely by the pair's life savings, was designed to pop up at private events and street corners across the city. It cost about as much as a car, a bold bet on a dream they were determined to turn into reality.

But San Francisco had other plans. The city's steep hills made pedaling a fully loaded trike nearly impossible, and navigating permits proved just as challenging. Rather than give up, Tom and Vida reimagined the business.

Their turning point came in early 2022, when Ryan Chinchilla, owner of **Lucinda's Deli**, invited them to set up inside his shop on weekends. That summer, they built the coffee counter customers know today, transforming a corner of Lucinda's into a warm, welcoming gathering spot.

The early days were slow; many days brought just 10 orders. But neighbors began telling neighbors.

Regulars brought friends. The smell of espresso drifted onto the sidewalk. Growth built steadily over time, expanding from weekend-only to serving the neighborhood seven days a week.

What began as a battery-powered tricycle has grown into one of the neighborhood's busiest coffee counters, powered by a tight-knit team of seven. Weekend mornings spill onto the sidewalk. It's the kind of place where you come for a latte and stay for a conversation.



Colin 2026

Tom and Vida are deeply grateful to Ryan and the entire Lucinda's team. Third Wheel wouldn't exist without their support. But sharing close quarters has its limits, and both businesses are excited for the opportunity to grow in ways that allow them to better serve customers while continuing to collaborate as neighbors.

Now, the next chapter is brewing.

Third Wheel is opening its first official storefront at **991 Oak Street**, just a block from Lucinda's. After years operating in tight quarters, Tom and Vida have signed an eight-year lease, a clear message to the neighborhood: they're here to stay.

The expansion reflects their steady, intentional approach to growth. "We really love being owner-operators and having high attention to detail, we always want to be in there ourselves serving our customers" they said.

Birthday Trees

by Stephen Braitsch

When San Francisco was founded in **1776** the city was largely treeless, its native landscape dominated by coastal scrub and sand dunes. In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, urban planners and residents began planting trees to beautify the city, with species like eucalyptus, Monterey pine, and a variety of palm trees. Street tree planting expanded significantly during the mid-20th century due to the introduction of neighborhood greening initiatives and

by the early 2000s, San Francisco had an estimated **105,000 to 125,000 street trees**.

Street trees are critical to the health of San Francisco. They reduce air pollution, absorb carbon dioxide, cool urban heat islands, support biodiversity, and manage stormwater.

Their philosophy: **grow the brand, not the business.**

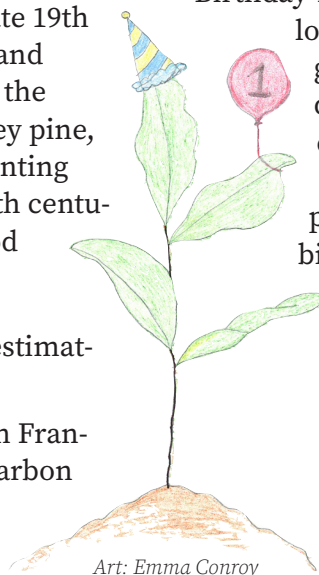
That level of care shows up in every detail of the new space. Instead of laptop-friendly individual tables, they're installing long benches designed to spark connection, inspired by the spontaneous connections they watched unfold in Lucinda's doorway. There are plenty of cafés to work from. Third Wheel is building something different, a place where neighbors meet and community is as essential as the coffee itself.

In the meantime, they're celebrating locally: their popular vanilla pine latte, a nod to this issue's tree theme, will stick around for another month. Stop by the cart at Lucinda's to grab one and taste the coffee that's fueling the neighborhood buzz!

When the doors open on **Oak Street** in **mid-April**, don't just pass by. Step inside, take a seat, and be part of the next chapter.

Despite challenges like limited space, maintenance costs, and drought stress, San Francisco continues to expand and manage its urban forest with a focus on climate resilience and environmental justice.

Birthday Trees is an homage to San Francisco's beloved street trees, which are easy to take for granted as we hustle across the city in our day-to-day lives. Just like you and me, they each have a birthday and there's a good chance a San Francisco street tree was planted on the day you were born. Find your birthday tree on our interactive map and then go outside and visit it, say thank you, and give it a hug.



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Waller Trees

by Caylee Tompkins



In January, the San Francisco Department of Public Works' Bureau of Urban Forestry moved for emergency removal of seven Indian laurel fig trees on Waller near Steiner, citing that they posed an "immediate public safety hazard," in a posted notice.

The ficus trees line a stretch of Waller just steps from homes and businesses and measure an average of 18 inches in trunk diameter, making them approximately 30 to 50 years old.

Discussion began circulating on Nextdoor on January 17, when Duboce Triangle resident Brian Kemler posted about the city's notice. The thread drew more than **250 comments** and hundreds of reactions, with neighbors split between expressing concern about losing mature trees and support for addressing potential safety risks.

In the weeks following, neighbors tied flowers, ribbons, and handwritten notes to the tree trunks in opposition to their removal.

Staff and patrons of Cafe Réveille said the trees define the block's character.

"Everyone has been sad about this," a Cafe Réveille barista shared.

"There's something magical about these trees," said local realtor Annie Chang. "They also add such value to the neighborhood, especially with the backdrop of the Victorian houses."

Joshua Klipp of the community environmental group

Mission Verde launched a petition opposing the removals that gathered more than **800 signatures**, urging the city to pause the decision and explore alternatives. Mission Verde also led an effort that successfully preserved roughly 80 trees along 24th Street after residents appealed similar removal plans.

After more than **400 residents** contacted local officials about the Waller trees, the district supervisor's office secured a secondary review of the planned removals.

"Our goal is to ensure that the community's voices are heard, and as soon as we were notified about the potential emergency removal of the Waller trees, our office escalated to city departments to pause and reassess," said District 5 Supervisor Bilal Mahmood. "We were able to secure a secondary review from the Acting Urban Forester which saved four of the trees and allowed the remaining three trees to be set for a public hearing. We appreciate everyone in the community who reached out – it is important to us that decisions around tree removals are guided and advised by experts but also allow for community process."

The initial notice deemed the trees "dead, dangerous, or likely to fall" and classified them as an immediate structural hazard qualifying for emergency removal but offered no specific structural findings.

Emergency removals allow the Bureau of Urban Forestry to act outside the standard posting and appeal timeline. City records show the trees were last pruned on June 25, 2025. The notice also indicated the trees will be replaced unless underground utility conflicts prevent replanting.

Historically, San Francisco's natural landscape was primarily coastal grassland and sand dunes, with few trees lining residential corridors. Over decades, civic groups, neighborhood associations and city-led initiatives transformed the streetscape, planting thousands of trees to create shade, calm traffic, and define neighborhood character. One such organization is Friends of the Urban Forest, a nonprofit that has worked to expand the city's canopy, particularly in neighborhoods lacking green space.

"We care deeply about our urban forest and want to see trees grow wherever possible. We love partnering with local associations like the Lower Haight Merchants & Neighbors Association to plant more trees," said Brian Wiedenmeier, executive director of the organization.

According to local experts, Indian laurel figs have been found to present long-term structural challenges in dense urban environments, including an aggressive root system and susceptibility to large limb failure as trees mature.

Some residents have expressed support for their removal. One neighbor wrote on Nextdoor that the trees “have reached the end of their life and should be removed before they cause any further damage.”

The city’s authority over street trees stems from Proposition E, approved by voters in 2016 and implemented in 2017. Before that change, adjacent property owners were responsible for maintaining



Art: Sage

Held by the Trees

by Asha Fereydowni

There is no single tree in the Lower Haight that stands out to me.

It’s just that they are there.

Present. Together.

With us.

With me.

Cradling the Wiggle

of bikers,

drivers,

diners,

protesters,

and babies, in strollers, pushed by grandparents.

And parents.

Soaking up the dogs. Oh so many dogs.

street trees and could be held liable if a branch fell or sidewalk damage caused injury. Proposition E shifted maintenance responsibility and legal liability for trees and sidewalks in the public right-of-way to the city under the StreetTreeSF program. While the measure established funding for the care of mature trees, it did not create a dedicated revenue source for planting new trees.

The community-led effort to save the Waller trees comes at a time where proposed legislation (File No. 251211 led by District 4 Supervisor Alan Wong) around tree petitioning weighs in the balance. The ordinance would eliminate the public appeal process for hazardous tree removals and allow developers to pay an in-lieu fee instead of planting required street trees connected to construction projects. Those funds would be allocated to plant and water street trees through a separate account within the City’s Adopt-A-Tree Fund.

A public hearing on the removal of the remaining three Waller trees is scheduled for 10 a.m. on April 1. In the meantime, constituents may request additional information prior to the hearing by contacting the Bureau of Urban Forestry at:

urbanforestry@sfdpw.org.

Living, breathing, surviving, and thriving.

Anchoring me.

Through the shards of glee and gloom,
with life.

Sustained

by the good view
above and around.

Together.

The people and
trees

of the Lower
Haight.



Art: Natalie Quek

Haight of Flavor - March

by Tamara Kahhale

When I walked by the trees on Waller and Steiner after the signs first went up for the trees to be cut down, it absolutely broke my heart. Trees provide so much for us, especially in urban spaces, and those trees specifically are so gorgeous and have so much history in their branches and leaves. I felt so inspired by my community when other signs started going up, thanking the trees for all they have done and questioning if cutting them down was the right call. Trees are simply essential for life on earth, and I hope you get a chance to honor them this month.

(Divis Farmers Market: Sundays from 9am - 1pm in the DMV parking lot on Fell/Oak - open yearround!)



Art: Rachael Wei

Broccoli

What is broccoli if not a mini tree? They grow as the flower of a plant, and as a member of the brassica family, have the best flavor in colder months. My favorite pairings are bright and acidic, like lemon, savory like parmesan, miso, or tahini, or with nuts, like pistachios or almonds.

Pine Needles (or Douglas Fir)

Did we mention it's the tree edition? Baking and cooking with parts from the tree is totally possible, and if using freshly harvested elements, can bring so much flavor to your dish. These shortbread cookies are just one thing you can do with pine or fir needles - other ideas include roasting veggies or chicken with fresh needles, infusing drinks or making a simple syrup, or making oils (and even lotions!).

Notes for Foraging and Harvesting:

Most conifers (evergreen trees with needles) are edible. There are a few species, specifically the Yew family, that are toxic, so please make sure to correctly identify the tree before harvesting (an app like iNaturalist will help you out!).

Once you have identified the tree you want to harvest from, feel free to take a nibble of the needle to see if it is a flavor you like. When ready to harvest, never cut the top of the tree as this can open the tree to disease. Simply **pinch** or **cut off** the needles you want, staying mindful of the tree's health and the ecosystem that tree is supporting. Never take more than what you need.

Shortbread Cookie Recipe

- 1/4 to 1/2 cup fresh conifer needles
- 1/2 cup sugar (100 grams)
- Pinch of salt
- 1-2 teaspoons citrus zest (optional)
- 2 cups flour (245 grams)
- 1 cup unsalted butter, cold

Chop the butter into small cubes or slices, and put them in the freezer.

Wash, then finely chop the needles (if you have a food processor or coffee/spice grinder that would be awesome!) with a knife. Remove any large bits from the chopped pile.

In a bowl, combine needles, sugar, zest, and salt. Add in flour and lightly mix.

Add in the butter, mixing it in by hand and breaking the butter apart until the texture is crumbly, similar to coarse sand. Be careful here not to overmix, since your dough will spread and not hold its shape if you do.

Pour out onto a surface, and form a rectangle about 1/4 inch thick. Use a knife or pizza cutter to cut the dough into your desired cookie shape.

Place them on a parchment paper lined baking sheet, and put the tray in the freezer or fridge while the oven preheats.

Preheat the oven to 350°F.

Bake for about 10 minutes, until the edges are golden brown.

Enjoy!



Art: Daniel Wang

Lessons in Growing Tall

by Emma Conroy

If you believe in Celtic legends, you may make it a habit of talking to your local trees - and you won't be surprised when the trees talk back. You might look to them for wisdom, protection, and solace in addition to shade. San Francisco's trees are numerous and varied, and you listen closely, they have some good advice:

From 'Mike', the 150-year old monterey cyprus off of Haight: **everything will change around you.** The place you find yourself might look nothing like the place you were built for. This makes your survival a celebration and your perspective a gift.

From the out-of-place palms along Oak or Page: **don't be afraid to stand out.** You can thrive without changing yourself to be like everyone else.

From Mount Sutro's blue gum eucalyptus: **bend in the wind.** If you must break, cast off your small branches but keep your core intact.

From the Sea Cliff pines and the cork oaks on Geary: **Improve your surroundings.** Clean the air you breathe, provide shade to passers-by, and let your color shine in a world of grey.

From the wizened and ginger-like london planes at the GGP Music Concourse, whose annual pollarding leaves them leafless: **you won't look your prettiest all the time.** It's okay to sacrifice now for future growth.

March Events

Full events listing at lowerhaightlocal.com/events

Lower Haight Local Neighbor Walk

When: March 17th, 6:30pm

Meeting Spot: Scott & Page

A walk on Saint Patrick's Day - we're going to make some Strava art while walking and chatting with neighbors.

Lower Haight Trash Pick Up

When: Every Sunday

Time: 10am - 11am

Meeting spot: Tarragon Cafe, 200 Fillmore St.

Picking up trash from the sidewalks and median strips, free lunch is provided

More info/sign up:

<https://www.mobilize.us/civicjoyfund/event/756056/>

From the watchtower douglas fir on Collingwood: **tap into your network and don't be afraid to rely on those around you.** Strengthen ties with your neighbors, for even the smallest among you may have things to share.

From every sidewalk tree ringed in concrete: **you don't need a palace from which to rule.** You can reach great heights without getting everything you want.

From the canopied coast live oak on Buena Vista's north slope: **use your strength to be a home for others.** Let the woodpeckers eat, the squirrels play, and the owls rest.

From the low-lying, sprawling coastal tea tree: no matter your worth, some may see you as a weed. Others will delight in your unique shapes - let them.



Lower Haight Local Art Night

When: TBD, Typically 3rd or 4th Wednesday

Time: 6:30pm - 9pm

Meeting spot: Near Scott & Page, will announce on Instagram and E-list and Website. DM for address!

Duboce Triangle Cleanup

When: Every 1st Sunday

Time: 12pm - 1pm

Meeting Spot: Duboce Park

Focus: picking up trash around the neighborhood

More info/sign up:

<https://www.mobilize.us/civicjoyfund/event/756121/>

Cozy Cubs Puzzle Club™



"Casual Games for
Consenting Adults"™

GREEN PARTY

One square in this puzzle has been pre-packed with **GREEN** to help you get the party started ... the **other four** are yours to discover.

Across

1. #2 US drug retailer, after CVS
6. About 1/28 of an ounce
10. You might call them cougars
15. "Fur" follower
16. Baklava layer
17. Green way to submit a return
18. Lawn game that'll have you rolling balls
19. Dweezil's sister Moon ___
20. Seuss character who "speaks for the trees"
21. Group game with solo cups
23. "My Own Worst Enemy" band
25. Small quantity?
26. Kindle display tech
27. Attendee's answer
28. Cow sound
29. Rita who played 72 Across
32. Sugarloaf song with a sweet organ solo
34. "Hell yeah!"
35. Piggy place
36. Mineral-rich rocks
37. Your strongest joint
38. Casserole recipe instruction
40. Descriptor of dungeons or memes
43. Lament sung by Kermit the Frog
49. Spinning shaft
50. Bed intruder?
51. Dance move that's banned in Saudi Arabia
52. McEntire of country music
55. "A rabbi and a priest walk into a ___"
56. "___ Don't Preach" (Madonna song)
57. Fed chair from 1987 to 2006
61. Bear who says "Only YOU ..."
63. Movie bear voiced by Seth MacFarlane
64. Son of gosh?
65. "Single Ladies (Put a ring ___)"
66. Like most sushi
67. Gerund's ending
68. Fenway park outfield feature
72. "West Side Story" character who sings "A Boy Like That"
74. Big deposit
76. Chicago's airport
77. O'Brien of late-night TV
78. "Dear ___ Hansen" (Broadway musical)
79. Sticky stuff for cellists and pitchers
80. Build, as a tower
81. Part of PFLAG
82. Knight's mount

Down

1. NASA's James ___ Space Telescope
2. Medicinal plant that you can grow at home
3. Reason to visit the school nurse
4. Background for a meteorologist
5. Enter via osmosis
6. Musical style of Dr. Dre's "The Chronic" and Snoop Dogg's "Doggystyle"
7. Tree age indicator
8. "Aladdin" prince
9. "Dr. Feelgood" band ___ Crue
10. Clobbered, as with snowballs

1	2	3	4 GREEN	5		6	7	8	9		10	11	12	13	14
15						16					17				
18						19					20				
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72			73				74	75				76			
77							78					79			
80							81					82			

Listen to the companion playlist at cozycubs.club/greenparty

11. ET's ride
12. San Diego base once home to TOPGUN
13. With ice cream
14. Magic wands and rabbits, to name a few
22. Lover of Lennon
24. Opposite of calmness
27. "Rock 'n' Roll (Part 2)", better known as "The ___ Song"
29. Half a seafood order?
30. Leave out
31. Weightlifters count them
32. It's ground to make matcha
33. Norse trickster god in the MCU
35. Lead-in to a ball game?
38. Word after black, boom, or hot
39. Braves' home, briefly
40. "___ Mak'er" (song by Led Zeppelin)
41. Face on a five, familiarly
42. Flanders who owned the Leftorium
44. It gets baked in a tandoor
45. Tchaikovsky ballet bird
46. Fargo location, abbr.
47. Make the Surprised Pikachu face
48. Home of the Cheese Heads
52. The grind
53. Rigby or Roosevelt
54. Likely result of a broken cork
55. "Moulin Rouge" director Luhrmann
56. Aimless attack
58. Frozen veggie mascot
59. Einstein of CA or Murray of WA
60. Pirate's prosthesis
61. Kind of cone
62. Secondary areas of study
65. Hints for the future
68. "When I Come Around" band
69. "Don't ___ me, bro!" (2007 catchphrase)
70. "Mistake by the lake" lake
71. Tear to pieces
73. It's 'tween tic and toe
75. Sex cells?



COZY CUBS PUZZLE CLUB

is a creative project of Sage Kitamorn.

This puzzle originally appeared in Cozy Cubs issue #4: "Trees," which also has a big, branching word ladder called "Word Tree." Scan below to keep playing.

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📷 [@cozycubspuzzleclub](https://www.instagram.com/cozycubspuzzleclub)

