

7 ON YOUR SIDE 

Tree policy hinders city's green program

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SAN FRANCISCO (KGO) -- State and local governments are encouraging everyone to go green and yet sometimes the government's own policies stand in the way.

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It is a classic 'Catch 22.' One city policy directly conflicts with another city policy and consumers are caught in the middle.

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Norman and Minnie Cromartie want to put solar panels on their San Francisco rooftop sometime soon. It could power their entire house with energy to spare. But, there is one thing standing in the way, a big eucalyptus tree.

"The tree is too high. It's too tall and it will block the solar panels," Norman told ABC7.

Since the tree belongs to the city and the city wants everybody to go solar, Norman figured the city would gladly trim it back. But, that is not what happened.

"We'd have to go back and consider the benefits of the solar and the benefits of the mature tree urban forest," explained Christine Falvey.

The city does want more solar but it also wants to protect trees. And, if it is a choice between the two there is no clear-cut winner.

"Everybody's talking about going green. The mayor wants San Francisco residents to go green," said Minnie. "The whole thing is very confusing."

So, the Cromarties called 7 On Your Side.

San Francisco's Department of Urban Forestry says it will not prune any tree to make way for solar if it means harming the tree. This seems contrary to the City's own ["Go Solar" program](#) which offered the Cromarties \$6,000 to install their solar panels.

"I think that There are times when the City seems to be working against itself," said Supervisor Bevan Dufty, who represents Norman's district up in Diamond Heights. "There are a lot of different laws and there's no way to kind of quilt them so they all perfectly stitch together."

7 On Your Side brought the City tree people together with Norman's solar people to try to work this all out.

"We don't want to see one green thing come in the way of another green thing," explained Greg Kennedy with Occidental Power. "Urban forest is here to see if we can trim the tree in such a way that doesn't damage the tree and still allow enough sunlight," said an Urban Forestry official.

The guys from Occidental Power climbed onto Norman's roof with a cool device that predicts sun exposure. It turned out the company can re-position the panels a bit, the City can prune the tree a bit, and Norman get almost as much power as if there were no tree at all.

"I think we can achieve the end between the photosynthesis and the photovoltaic," Kennedy said.

"Yes we can trim back the tree to facilitate

this project," seconded another Urban Forestry official.

"I should thank 7 On Your Side for doing my job," said Dufty. "You can combine and compromise a bit and achieve both goals."

Norman and Minnie are a little skeptical. They want to know the city will keep trimming over time to keep the sunlight hitting the panels

"And if they do that, I'm happy. I love the tree and I don't want to cut the tree down," said Minnie.

State law says a tree may not shadow a neighbor's solar panels unless the tree was there first and it was already tall enough to shade the panels. With more people wanting solar, this conflict is bound to come up more and 7 On Your Side will be watching.

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