

**MATERIAL PREPARED FOR DISCUSSION BY THE URBAN FORESTRY COMMISSION.
THIS DELIBERATIVE DOCUMENT DOES NOT REFLECT THE OPINION OF THE URBAN
FORESTRY COMMISSION AND MAY OR MAY NOT MOVE FORWARD TO VOTE.**

October 6, 2021

Seattle City Council

Re: SLI MO-001-A-002 "Recommend strategies for consolidating urban forestry functions" and Process for Collaboration

Dear Mayor and Seattle City Councilmembers,

The Urban Forestry Commission (UFC) formally expresses its frustration with the City's process in responding to Statement of Legislative Intent SLI MO-001-A-002. The UFC is frankly embarrassed by the response the Council received from the UFC and City staff.

SLI MO-001-A-002 requested that "the Executive, Urban Forestry Commission (UFC), and Urban Forestry Interdepartmental Team evaluate models for consolidating the City's urban forest management functions and, based on this evaluation, make recommendations on how changes could be implemented." The evaluation was presented as a task that the Executive, City staff, and UFC work on in partnership. On July 15, 2021, the UFC transmitted to Council the first of two responses to the SLI, writing that the "UFC looks forward to collaborating with the City and awaits an invitation to begin this work," and requested that the "UFC and staff meet in deliberative sessions."

However, the UFC never received an invitation to collaborate. No deliberative sessions were held. The UFC submitted to Council a final, independent response to the SLI by letter dated September 8, 2021.

On September 15, 2021, City staff also transmitted to Council a response to the SLI. The letter outlined the City's process in preparing the response, stating "As directed in the SLI, staff have consulted with the Mayor's Office and have had initial conversations with the UFC," and that City staff "worked during this year on this request, with the [Urban Forestry] Core Team meeting on a biweekly basis for several months...".

The UFC does not recall initial conversations about the SLI and was not invited to participate in any of the biweekly meetings. When asked what prevented collaboration with the UFC, City staff cited limited staff capacity and competing priorities, including engagement related to Resolution 31902 and finalizing the Urban Forestry Management Plan.

The UFC is a technical advisory body with extensive experience on tree protection, management, and policy. However, the UFC's effectiveness is severely limited by information made available

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and the access to working with City staff. The UFC sees Commissioners as a resource and additional capacity for City staff when feasible. We encourage the Mayor and staff to utilize Commissioners in instances when City staff is constrained.

Additionally, the UFC would like to set up a clear plan for collaboration with City staff to deliver a meaningful consideration of the urban forest management authority, as requested in the SLI. The UFC feels that the 2022 budget provides an opportunity to remedy challenges with staff resources the City is able to devote to this important issue. Establishing a collaborative scoping meeting and devising a timeline for delivering a joint response could be an effective way to begin this effort.

The UFC's purpose is to advise Mayor and Council on urban forestry management. A key set of important actions the City can take on urban forestry are to 1) be transparent, accessible, and utilize all available resources, 2) appropriately resource forest management, 3) have clear lines of authority and responsibility. This collaborative SLI is an opportunity for the City to engage on each of these.