

Seattle Urban Forestry Commission

Peg Staeheli, Chair • Tom Early, Vice-Chair

Gordon Bradley • Leif Fixen • Donna Kostka • Joanna Nelson de Flores • Jeff Reibman • Erik Rundell • Steve Zemke

July 15, 2014.

Councilmember Sally Bagshaw
Seattle City Hall
600 4th Avenue
Seattle, WA 98124

Dear Councilmember Bagshaw,

We are proud of Seattle's ongoing commitment to addressing climate change, demonstrated by Mayor Murray's participation in last month's US Conference of Mayors, but without a robust tree protection ordinance for private property, Seattle risks falling behind. Enclosed is a table comparing Seattle to other cities in this arena.

In 2009, City Council issued Resolution 31138 instructing "...the Department of Planning and Development to submit legislation by May 2010 to establish a comprehensive set of regulations and incentives to limit the removal of trees and promote the retention and addition of trees within the City of Seattle on both private and public property..."

We would like to reiterate the statement made in our August 2010 recommendation: Bold action, consistent with Resolution 31138, is needed to achieve Seattle's tree canopy coverage goal of 30% by 2037. And because the majority of trees in Seattle are in residential property, an updated tree ordinance is key to implement the 2013 Urban Forest Stewardship Plan as adopted by City Council last September.

DPD released a first proposal in 2010 and a second proposal in 2012. It is now almost five years since the Resolution and DPD is still working on a tree ordinance for trees on private property. There was a significant amount of time and energy invested by the community in this process. This length of time tends to frustrate the public as they look for guidance on tree measures.

We urge you use your leadership in Council's Seattle Public Utilities and Neighborhoods Committee to:

1. Encourage DPD to resume work on this important element of a comprehensive urban forestry strategy for Seattle with a more **defined timeline** than the one currently shown on their website.
2. To develop an improved public education and outreach approach that **engages Seattle's diverse stakeholder communities**.
3. **Require a reporting** of how the new proposal addresses the DPD specific elements of the Resolution:
 - a. The 15 elements of Section 1;
 - b. The four elements of Section 2; and
 - c. The section for requirements for institutions, City facilities, public facilities, and schools.

We appreciate your commitment to Seattle’s urban forest and look forward to working with you on this matter.

Sincerely,



Peg Staeheli, Chair
Urban Forestry Commission

Tree Protection on Private Property in Seattle vs. Other Cities

City	Tree Ordinance/Code	Permit	Replacement	Tree diameter threshold
Bellevue, WA	Yes	In some cases	In some cases	8"
Kirkland, WA	Yes	Yes (for significant trees and more than two trees)	Yes	6"
Redmond, WA	Yes	Yes	Yes	6"
Seattle, WA	<i>Interim</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>No</i>	6"
Spokane	Yes (for historic and heritage trees)	No	No	6"
Tacoma	No	No	No	n/a
Vancouver, WA	Yes	Yes	Yes	n/a
Atlanta, GA	Yes	Yes	Yes	6"
Austin, TX	Yes	Yes	Yes	19"
Portland, OR	Yes	Yes	Yes	12"
Vancouver, B.C.	Yes	Yes	Yes	8"

cc: Mayor Ed Murray, Council President Burgess, Councilmember Clark, Councilmember Godden, Councilmember Harrell, Councilmember Licata, Councilmember Rasmussen, Councilmember O’Brien, Councilmember Sawant, Jill Simmons, Diane Sugimura, Brennon Staley, Eric McConaghy

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