

**MATERIAL PREPARED FOR DISCUSSION BY THE URBAN FORESTRY COMMISSION.
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May 6, 2015.

Mayor Ed Murray and Councilmember Sally Bagshaw
Seattle City Hall
600 4th Avenue
Seattle, WA 98124

RE: Arboretum Mixed Use Trail

Dear Mayor Murray and Councilmember Bagshaw,

Seattle Parks and Recreation staff briefed the Commission on the Arboretum Multi Use Trail project and has been very helpful in answering the Commission's questions.

The Commission is aware that this project is part of the [2001 Washington Park](#) Arboretum Master Plan where the City agreed to work with our University of Washington partners to provide a space for the Arboretum collection to be located and that Seattle Parks and the Arboretum have done extensive public engagement around this project. Still, the Commission has several concerns about this project:

1. The sheer number of trees to be removed to accommodate this 14 ft. wide trail. Of the 168 trees to be removed, 65 are native species. 50 are 18" or greater in caliper. The eight largest trees to be removed are natives between 36" and 50" in caliper. These removals ~~represent~~ will result in a significant amount of canopy.
2. When Commissioners walked the proposed new trail's path they noticed that it runs parallel and in close proximity to an existing trail. Also, the Arboretum Drive already provides a paved option for cyclists. The Commission urges the project team to re-design this project to save as many large trees as possible by incorporating the existing pedestrian trail into the project.
3. Considering Seattle's increasing density, the changing demands for open space, and the fact that the Arboretum Master Plan is 14 years old document that may no longer represent City priorities in terms of canopy cover and open space goals, the Commission recommends re-assessing the needs of Seattle residents ~~to in order to update the~~ inform an updated master plan.

Lastly, the Commission commends the Parks Department for the intensive effort to move some of the trees, propagate those that can't be moved, and applying the City's Two-for-One Tree Replacement Policy to the project in a manner that is consistent with city policy. ~~The two-for-one tree replacement is crucial for mitigation of the significant canopy loss and correlating loss of environmental services that this project will incur with its current design.~~

Preserving mature trees, especially native species, in Seattle's dense urban environment is challenging. There are few locations where our large conifers can thrive without growing onto overhead power lines, or causing damage to underground utilities and sidewalks, or causing sightline issues in our rights-of-way. In order to accomplish the Urban Forest Stewardship Plan's goal of 30 percent canopy cover the City should focus tree conservation efforts on locations that provide sufficient soil and don't present infrastructure conflicts such as Parks land and the Arboretum.

Sincerely,