

Seattle Urban Forestry Commission

Peg Staeheli, Chair • Tom Early, Vice-Chair

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December 3, 2014.

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

RE: Queen Anne Children's Home Property – Toll Brothers Development Code Departures
DPD #3015522

Dear Mayor Murray and Councilmember Bagshaw,

The Urban Forestry Commission was briefed by members of the Future Queen Anne community group on the development of the property known as Seattle Children's Home.

The Commission understands that the developer is asking for a number of departures from the code while still submitting under the current Low Rise 1. The Commission requests a balanced review of departures and considerations given the applicant is requesting the removal of several exceptional trees. The Commission wonders why this granting of exceptions to code for the removal of exceptional trees appears to come without corresponding demonstration and rigor as to other options. Furthermore, it appears that technicalities of tree location may result in the loss of healthy exceptional historically placed elms.

This 2.5-acre parcel has over 80 mature trees, 47 of which are exceptional. The community group has been in communication with DPD and the developer and reached out to the Commission seeking guidance and support to ensure that decisions are made with full review of Seattle goals and policies for trees and vegetation.

We have reviewed the November 2013 response from DPD's Director to Councilmembers Conlin and Burgess as well as more recent arborist's reports. One of the reports, and its update, was commissioned by the applicant and one was commissioned by the community.

The Commission recognizes density is welcomed in our city. We also believe this density should come with a balance of meeting the other stated City goals for urban environment and especially the City Council approved Urban Forest Stewardship Plan. Based on this we request the following steps:

1. Include the urban Forestry Commission on all correspondence for this project.
2. DPD hire an independent arborist to review the two conflicting reports (one by applicant and one by community) to verify the status of exceptional trees.
3. DPD and SDOT Directors to review and approve whether or not the grove designation applies to this American Elms site. The Commission believes the Director's Rule intended the statement on street trees not being part of a grove to protect the ability of the City to do improvements in the

right of way according to city infrastructure standards and not be encumbered by the grove definition. Specifically these particular trees are located back of sidewalk and do not impact the city's ability to make improvements within the right-of-way.

4. The record information we saw did not include a site plan option showing the saving all exceptional trees and demonstrating what departures might be required to retain the exceptional trees which is our understanding to be standard procedure. Applicant should submit plans showing options to retain the elms and other perimeter exceptional trees. In other words, departure should include active off setting measures to save trees.
5. As part of any departure grant the applicant should be required to submit a planting plan that indicates how this site will contribute to the City's 30% canopy goals stated in the UFSP. If the site cannot accommodate root zone and canopy space to meet canopy goals then the applicant should provide offsetting mitigation for tree planting in the broader neighborhood.
6. Finally, as part of any granted departures, this project should be required to employ best practices for tree protection; construction excavation methodology, soil volume, permeable pavements and preventative maintenance (See James Urban's "Up By Roots: Healthy Soils in the Built Environment"). We are concerned that even the trees currently shown to be retained on the applicant's plans will not survive without more detailed protection and enhancement requirements. Again, this applicant is requesting departures and requesting city approval to remove "Exceptional Trees."

We believe Seattle has the development skills to provide for both housing density and viable large canopy trees.

Sincerely,



Peg Staeheli, Chair
Seattle Urban Forestry Commission

cc: Council President Burgess, Councilmember Clark, Councilmember Godden, Councilmember Harrell, Councilmember Licata, Councilmember Rasmussen, Councilmember O'Brien, Councilmember Sawant, Jill Simmons, Diane Sugimura, Scott Kubly, Barbara Gray, Darren Morgan, Nolan Rundquist, Brennon Staley, Liza Rutzick, Bruce Rips, Erik McConaghy

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