

# Seattle Urban Forestry Commission

Tom Early, Chair • Steve Zemke, Vice-Chair

Weston Brinkley • Leif Fixen • Reid Haefer • Donna Kostka • Richard Martin • Joanna Nelson de Flores  
Erik Rundell • Andrew Zellers

November 9, 2016

Councilmember Mike O'Brien  
Seattle City Hall  
600 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue  
Seattle, WA 98124

RE: Backyard cottages and Accessory Dwelling Units

Dear Councilmember O'Brien,

The Office of Planning and Community Development briefed the Urban Forestry Commission about the proposed changes to the zoning code to remove barriers to the construction of backyard cottages and accessory dwelling units (ADUs) at our September 14 meeting. Based on this briefing, we have a couple comments and suggestions for the City Council regarding the legislation.

The proposed change to remove the off-street parking requirement should help reduce impervious surface and provide more flexibility in maintaining and increasing trees and greenery when backyard cottages or ADUs are built. Maintaining this provision in the final proposal will be important in reducing potential trade-off between providing more housing and maintaining the city's tree canopy.

However, even with reduced impervious surface requirements, in some instances existing trees will be cut down to make room for a new backyard cottage or ADU. The current draft proposal does not provide any way to mitigate the loss of these trees. The Commission would like to see the proposed changes include mitigation for trees that are removed due to the construction of a backyard cottage or ADU. Policy options could include requiring replanting a tree of similar potential size and type on the property or mitigation payments to fund planting trees elsewhere if trees cannot be planted on site.

Seattle's Urban Forest represents a vital part of the city's green infrastructure that provides numerous benefits for all residents. The Urban Forest Stewardship Plan has a goal to achieve 30 percent tree canopy cover by 2037. It's important to note that Single Family residential areas have the most tree canopy in Seattle. Ensuring opportunities for new affordable housing while maintaining and growing the city's tree canopy, will be

important for Seattle to meet its housing, social equity, and environmental sustainability goals. Balancing these goals will enhance the overall quality of life for all residents.

Thank you,



Tom Early, Chair



Erik Rundell

cc: Mayor Edward B. Murray, Council President Harrell, Councilmember Bagshaw, Councilmember Burgess, Councilmember Gonzalez, Councilmember Herbold, Councilmember Johnson, Councilmember Juarez, Councilmember Sawant, Jessica Finn Coven, Nathan Torgelson, Michelle Caulfield, Nicolas Welch, Dionne Foster, Aaron Blumenthal, Eric McConaghy.

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