

# 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  
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September 14, 2016

Susan McLaughlin  
Seattle Department of Transportation  
700 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue  
Seattle, WA 98124

RE: Streets Illustrated: 2<sup>nd</sup> Working Draft Review of the 10-year update to the Right-of-way Improvements Manual (ROWIM)

Dear Susan,

The draft update to the ROWIM has several improvements to street trees which will enhance the City's goal of increasing tree canopy coverage, increase the health of street trees at maturity and reduce infrastructure conflicts. We are particularly encouraged by the clear articulation of 1,200 cubic feet minimum of soil volume for downtown trees.

We would like to see two additions to reiterate a soil volume standard found in the latter portion of the document and to clarify the intent of designing adequate conditions for street trees. The reiteration of 1,200 cubic feet of soil volume is part of the general street tree design standards. The concern is that the soil volume requirement will not be addressed by the applicants who only review the general street tree standards found in the early portion of the document. The second addition is to articulate the intent of providing conditions for the healthiest street trees possible so that they can all reach maturity and remain healthy at maturity. Specifically, here's where our suggestions might be inserted, see bold italics below for page 128:

"Tree pits: are typically used as an alternative to planting strips in business districts where additional sidewalk width is important to accommodate pedestrian volumes. When permitted as an alternative to planting strips, tree pits shall be constructed per Standard Plan 424, dimensioned to meet or exceed the minimum size required to meet standards. The minimum square footage for a tree pit is 24sf of open area (typically 4 feet x 6 feet or 5 feet x 5 feet). Any proposal dimensioned below minimum standards shall be subject to site-specific review to ensure that:

- conditions justify the substandard size;
- ***soil volume (uncompacted or structural soil) is maximized***
- the design meets public safety standards; and
- the design provides adequate conditions to ***support the proposed tree species to reach maturity in good health.***"

Thank you for your work to enhance street trees and their soil volume in the updated ROWIM.

Sincerely,



Tom Early, Chair  
Seattle Urban Forestry Commission

cc: Mayor Edward B. Murray, Council President Harrell, Councilmember Bagshaw, Councilmember Burgess, Councilmember Gonzalez, Councilmember Herbold, Councilmember Johnson, Councilmember Juarez, Councilmember O'Brien, Councilmember Sawant, Jessica Finn Coven, Scott Kubly, Darren Morgan, Eric McConaghy.

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