

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
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.

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 by both the applicant and the community.

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.

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 review of the two reports (one by applicant and one by community) to verify the status of exceptional trees.
3. DPD and SDOT review and sign off on the interpretation that the trees on the edge of the right-of-way do not contribute to a "grove". The Commission believes this to be a definition of convenience for this historic property and right-of-way of trees and misses the intent of the grove definition as these trees sit back of sidewalk and/or on the property line.
4. 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 meet the canopy goals stated in the UFSP (this site is a hybrid zone so it appears canopy goals are between 20%-Multi-family and 33%-Single Family)

6. 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.
7. Finally, 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 trees shown to be protected on the applicant's plans will not survive without more detailed requirements. Again, this applicant is requesting departures AND requesting 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, Brennon Staley, Erik McConaghy

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