

**MATERIAL PREPARED FOR DISCUSSION BY THE URBAN FORESTRY COMMISSION.  
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COMMISSION AND MAY OR MAY NOT MOVE FORWARD TO VOTE.**

DRAFT of SUFC recommendations re SPRD's Draft Supplemental Use Guidelines for Natural Areas/Greenbelts for 7/1/15 SUFC discussion:

The Seattle Urban Forestry Commission (SUFC) urges the Seattle Board of Park Commissioners to vote NO on the proposed draft supplemental use guidelines (insert web link) at its meeting on July 23, 2015 and return the draft to Park staff for more work.

SUFC's mission is: "...to advise the Mayor and the City Council concerning the establishment of policy and regulations governing the protection, management, and conservation of trees and vegetation in the City of Seattle." In this role, it sees the following policy areas that require more work:

1. Environmental Critical Areas (ECAs) should be withdrawn from new uses. They include fish and wildlife areas, steep landslide-prone slopes, wetlands, streams, etc. – all vulnerable areas in which preservation of trees and vegetation are critical to the sustainability of those ecosystems. They also ensure that those designated fish and wildlife areas will be preserved to have the opportunity to become future "wildlife sanctuaries" in the City – a category Parks currently is willing to withhold from new use consideration along with marine sanctuaries. ECA areas deserve being held in trust for future generations and used today for education and scientific purposes. We urge withdrawal of ECAs from new use consideration.
2. Parks must be sure environmental review of new uses includes all phases of the plan to initiate a new use in a natural area/greenbelt and allow sufficient time to evaluate the new use in action before any other new uses are considered. To review phase by phase does not build public trust, because the public does not know what is coming next. We urge Parks to write into its supplemental use guidelines that (a) all phases of a new use must be considered at the same time to be sure cumulative impacts are evaluated sufficiently and (b) allow at least five years after the last phase for Parks to evaluate environmental impacts before any other new use is considered for a designated natural area/greenbelt.
3. The draft checklist gives the public the perception environment is only one in four or 25% of the areas of evaluation for a new use. Sustaining the City's forest and vegetation should be Park's first priority, because it is the foundation of the City's park system. So, at minimum, environment should be given equal weight with non-environmental considerations in a checklist. We urge: (a) a reorganization of the checklist into two sections, the first -- environmental preservation/acquisition (broader than the proposed "habitat" section) and the

second -- public access/education/recreation/safety, or similar wording, followed by: (b) a determination that the location for a proposed new use cannot be met any other place but in a natural area/greenbelt.

4. The thousands of hours contributed by Seattle citizens both individually and through the Green Seattle Partnership in restoring forest land in Parks' natural areas/greenbelts can be threatened by new uses. These people have worked to keep the City's urban forest growing, and they worry that new uses will cause trees and vegetation and related wildlife habitat to be impacted. Their participation in future restoration work could depend on their attitude concerning Parks' process. They currently plant more trees and other vegetation than any other group in the City, and Parks should not jeopardize this source of volunteer labor and moral support. We urge Parks write into its policy that before there is a final decision on a new use in a location, it ensures: (a) a required consultation with neighbors, volunteers, and a "friends of" or "adopt a park" group that has worked in a designated natural area/greenbelt, followed by: (b) an extensive public process to ensure that all citizens in the city have a chance for input on changing the use of a natural area/greenbelt.
5. "New uses" is an unknown that could be open to interpretation and have serious impact on the City's trees and vegetation in its natural areas/greenbelts. The proposed guidelines leaves it open to whatever may be suggested in the future. We urge Parks to clearly list only those new uses that are being considered at this time.

The Commission further requests Parks give more time for a second draft of the supplemental use guidelines to be prepared and to allow further review by the public. Natural areas/greenbelts are a treasure that Parks should make it hard to alter – not easy.

Sincerely,

Proposed by SUFC Committee: Gordon Bradley, Donna Kostka, Steve Zemke