

SEATTLE URBAN FORESTRY COMMISSION

Weston Brinkley (Position #3 – University), Chair • **Sarah Rehder** (Position #4 – Hydrologist), Vice-chair
Steve Zemke (Position #1 – Wildlife Biologist) • **Elby Jones** (Position #2 – Urban Ecologist - ISA)
Stuart Niven (Position #5 – Arborist – ISA) • **Michael Walton** (Position #6 – Landscape Architect – ISA)
Joshua Morris (Position #7 – NGO) • **Blake Voorhees** (Position # 9 – Realtor)
Neeeyati Johnson (Position #10 – Get Engaged) • **Whit Bouton** (Position #11 – Environmental Justice - ISA)
Jessica Jones (Position # 12 – Public Health) • **Shari Selch** (Position # 13 – Community/Neighborhood)

July 1, 2020.

Mayor Jenny A. Durkan and Seattle City Council Members
Seattle City Hall
600 4th Ave
Seattle, WA 98124

RE: Statement of Support for Black Lives Matter

Dear Mayor Durkan and Councilmembers,

The Urban Forestry Commission (UFC) stands with Black Lives Matter. The UFC condemns the murders of George Floyd, Rayshard Brooks, Breonna Taylor, and many other Black Americans at the hands of police. The UFC acknowledges that this systemic racial violence also lives within our own city. The UFC honors their lives and demands an end to the killing of unarmed Black civilians by police.

As an advisory body to the City of Seattle, the UFC acknowledges it is occupying the traditional land of the Duwamish and Coast Salish people. The current system of lawmaking in Seattle, including Council and the Mayor, is created through a white normative process which amplifies white voices and minimizes voices of Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC). The UFC is a part of this process and is committed to identifying and halting manifestations of white supremacy and seeking greater equity within the UFC. The UFC will continue to work with City departments and support increased and improved use of the City's Racial Equity Toolkit; ensure environmental justice is achieved through the City's urban forestry efforts; foster intentional dialogue amongst UFC members on topics of racial, social, and environmental equity; and welcome public comment to guide UFC work on these specific issues.

Furthermore, the UFC recognizes its direct responsibility to address environmental racism and gentrification concerns in Seattle. People of color are more likely to live near polluters or breathe polluted air. Thus, particulate air pollution has disproportionate adverse impacts on health outcomes in BIPOC communities. As climate change progresses, the most severe impacts will affect Seattle's already marginalized communities. Additionally, the 2016 Seattle Tree

[Canopy Assessment](#) found that “census tracts where the population tends to be residents of color and people with lower than average income also have lower amounts of tree canopy.” Trees are a tool of environmental protection and public health. The UFC pledges to support policies that remedy tree canopy discrepancies for recommendation to Mayor and Council.

At this time, the UFC urges the Mayor and Council to listen to community members and enact change that dismantles systems of oppression and redresses the harm to Black folks by the Seattle Police Department and City of Seattle government.

Sincerely,



Weston Brinkley, Chair

Neeyati Johnson

Neeyati Johnson

cc: Jessica Finn Coven, Michelle Caulfield, Urban Forestry Management Team, Urban Forestry Core Team, Yolanda Ho, Paúl Quiñonez Figueroa

Sandra Pinto de Bader, Urban Forestry Commission Coordinator
City of Seattle, Office of Sustainability & Environment
PO Box 94729 Seattle, WA 98124-4729 Tel: 206-684-3194 Fax: 206-684-3013
www.seattle.gov/UrbanForestryCommission