

SEATTLE URBAN FORESTRY COMMISSION

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March 13, 2019

Councilmember Rob Johnson
City Hall
600 4th Ave
Seattle, WA 98124

RE: Letter of Recommendation related to MHA Ordinance Amendments

Dear Councilmember Johnson,

The Seattle Urban Forestry Commission (UFC) has reviewed the approved amendments relating to the Urban Forestry in the Mandatory Housing Affordability (MHA) Ordinance as well as the proposed language relating the Urban Forestry in Section 5 of the Draft Companion MHA Resolution.

The UFC commends the City for incorporating many of the suggestions in both the approved MHA amendment and the Companion MHA Resolution that the UFC has noted in the [MHA DEIS Letter dated May 2, 2017](#); the recommendations outlined in the [MHA Ordinance letter dated August, 1, 2018](#); as well as the MHA Amendment to [MHA Ordinance dated February 9, 2019](#).

The UFC appreciates the City's continued recognition of the environmental, social, and economic benefits of Seattle's urban forest, and its commitment to working with community members (including the UFC) and City Departments to update City's tree regulations to advance the goals of the Urban Forestry Stewardship Plan (UFSP).

APPROVED AMENDMENTS:

The UFC has the following additional comments of the specific language related to the urban forest for the approved amendments to MHA:

Approved amendments	UFC Comments
Additional protections for trees planted to meet tree planting requirements in RSL	The UFC supports the additional tree planting requirements in RSL that indicate trees must be healthy for 5 years.

Approved amendments	UFC Comments
Increased tree planting requirements in RSL zones to achieve a 33% tree canopy cover target	Per guidance outlined in UFC letter dated August 31, 2018 , lot-specific tree canopy cover targets are problematic, complicated, and not effective on a single-lot scale. The current amendment based on a set ratio and point system of “1 tree point per 500 sf of lot area” is an alternative way to achieve the goal of tree preservation and tree planting but should not be conflated with canopy cover targets.
Creation of a new fee-in-lieu option for satisfying tree planting requirements in RSL	The UFC commends this effort and looks forward to working with Council on the development of this rule and its inclusion in the Tree Protection Ordinance update as well as its expansion to all zones in Seattle.
Require arborists working with the City to be certified by the International Society of Arboriculture (ISA)	The UFC supports this amendment.

PROPOSED RECOMMENDATIONS:

All of the recommendations in section 5 of the Draft Companion MHA Resolution were supported by the UFC’s [letter dated August 31, 2018](#). While the UFC appreciates these recommendations being addressed in a Draft Companion MHA Resolution, there is nothing in the Companion Resolution that recommends the approval of the updated Tree Ordinance, which the UFC feels is the most critical step for implementing these recommendations. The UFC would propose the section 5 of the Draft Companion MHA Resolution be rewritten as follows (new language noted in green/italics):

To pass an updated Tree Ordinance that includes the following:

- a. Retaining protections for exceptional trees and expanding the definition of exceptional trees.
- b. Creating a permitting process for the removal of significant trees, defined as trees 6” in diameter at breast height or larger.
- c. Adding replacement requirements for significant tree removal.
- d. Simplifying tree planting and replacement requirements.
- e. Establishing tree removal limits in single-family zones to two per year.*
- f. Implementing the fee in-lieu option for all tree replacement in all zones across the city.*
- g. Tracking tree removal and replacement throughout Seattle.
- h. Providing adequate funding to administer and enforce tree regulations.

Thank you for the continued effort to support the urban forest. The UFC would appreciate being involved further regarding implementation of the approved MHA amendments focused on trees as

well as the recommendations identified in the Draft Companion Resolution.

Sincerely,



Weston Brinkley, Chair



Craig Johnson

cc: Mayor Durkan, Council President Harrell, Councilmember Bagshaw, Councilmember Gonzalez, Councilmember Herbold, Councilmember Juarez, Councilmember Mosqueda, Councilmember O'Brien, Councilmember Sawant, Jessica Finn Coven, Nathan Torgelson, Samuel Assefa, Michelle Caulfield, Mike Podowski, Maggie Glowacki, Brennon Staley, Chanda Emery, Urban Forestry Management Team, Urban Forestry Core Team, Sara Maxana, Daniel Strauss, Aaron Blumenthal, Peter Lindsay, Eric McConaghy, Yolanda Ho, Amanda Hohlfeld

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