

# Seattle Urban Forestry Commission

John Floberg, Chair • John Small, Vice-Chair

Gordon Bradley • Tom Early • Leif Fixen • Matt Mega • Jeff Reibman • Erik Rundell • Peg Staeheli

June 5, 2013

Mayor Michael McGinn and Councilmember Richard Conlin  
Seattle City Hall  
600 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue  
Seattle, WA 98124

RE: Position paper on Trees and Views

Dear Mayor McGinn and Councilmember Conlin,

Currently private residents who would like to prune public trees in order to maintain views apply to the City of Seattle for a permit. Considering the topography of the city and the attractiveness of private views available, the desire to prune public trees is understandable. However, the private benefits of views can be at odds with public benefits of trees. Increasingly, as the City's trees grow and regulations protecting our urban forest are strengthened, conflict over City trees and private view maintenance has the potential to increase. Because of this, we believe public trees and the private view is a topic that deserves a clear and concise policy.

Our opinion is that there is no public benefit in pruning or removing City trees in order to maintain private views. Yet the City does have a responsibility to respond to appropriate and responsible requests from its residents. Maintaining views is going to be a regular and repeated request from the residents of Seattle.

In light of these requests, we recommend that public trees may be pruned for private view maintenance only if all of the following criteria are met:

1. The applicant shall bear all costs to the City, including staff time, for administering the permit including noticing to neighbors within 300 feet of the proposal.
2. The area of canopy removal is offset with an equal or greater area contribution to enhance Seattle's Urban Forest via the Green Seattle Partnership (GSP), Seattle reLeaf, or similar urban forestry enhancement/replacement program for the City of Seattle.
3. The proposal is not objectionable to a property owner receiving a notice of application.
4. The proposal is judged by the appropriate City Department to be a reasonable and fair impact for the City.
5. Enhancing or creating a view rather than simply maintaining a view shall be discouraged.

6. The proposal follows all applicable Critical Areas Ordinances.
7. All work will be done to ANSI A300 and Z133 standards and no trees will be topped.

Clearly, there are many benefits, public and private, to the views that Seattle affords. Similarly, there are many benefits that a healthy urban forest affords. Our position is that valuing private views *at the expense* of public trees is something that we should carefully consider.

Sincerely,



John Floberg, Chair



Tom Early

cc: Council President Clark, Councilmember Bagshaw, Councilmember Burgess, Councilmember Godden, Councilmember Harrell, Councilmember Licata, Councilmember Rasmussen, Councilmember O'Brien, Christopher Williams, Jill Simmons, Nancy Ahern, Doug Critchfield, Mark Mead, Miles Mayhew, Jana Dilley, Michael Jenkins, Meg Moorehead, Christa Valles

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