



Richard Conlin
Seattle City Council

April 13, 2012

Matt Mega, Chair
Urban Forestry Commission
C/o Sandra Pinto de Bader
700 Fifth Avenue, 27th Floor
Seattle, WA 98124

Dear Urban Forestry Commissioners,

Thank you for your work to ensure that the proposed Tree Regulations Update helps the City meet our urban forestry goals. As you know, it is a difficult task to craft tools that can grow our urban forest while also giving property owners choices that balance other important priorities, such as gardens, recreational space, sunlight, and safety.

I have reviewed your correspondence and position papers as part of our review of the Department of Planning and Development's (DPD) original policy proposal. I really appreciate your commitment to work with DPD to bring additional perspectives to their process and to develop specific policy papers that address key issues.

I would like to encourage the Commission to take a holistic approach to how we can achieve our urban forest priorities, considering a full range of strategies to make the most of both public and private property in achieving the goals of the City's Urban Forest Management Plan. It is my belief that we should embrace ecosystem thinking, and that our goal should be to foster the growth of a diverse, multi-age, multi-species forest in the city with appropriate understory. The Seattle forest should be focused on native or native-adapted trees, and self-sustaining to the extent possible, with minimal requirements for pruning and management, especially on public property. Recognizing that individual trees and small groups of trees can be great assets to property owners and communities, I think our focus should be on providing a set of incentives and parameters that will encourage groves and stands of trees, whether in linear form along streets, in backyards where property owners are willing participants, on larger parcels of land including parks, or in cooperating neighborhoods where neighbors can come together to steward these groupings.

On private property, I believe that an incentive based approach to encourage private property owners to plant and retain more trees is the best strategy, including creative ways to engage private property owners as partners early in recognizing the inherent value of trees on their property. I am very interested in exploring neighborhood based conservation approaches, such as LIDs, tree easements, community covenants regarding tree maintenance and preservation, and tree cooperatives, where maintenance and preservation can be planned and shared in the

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community. In areas being developed, I suggest that the Seattle Green Factor is a great model of how we can best support the maximum amount of trees and an ecosystem approach. While I appreciate the appeal of a 'tree removal permit' and similar regulatory approaches, I believe that an approach based on a regulatory model will be insufficient to meet our city's goals. I do want to consider how we can best maintain exceptional trees that are currently protected, and would not exclude regulation from the toolkit, but I think it should not be the centerpiece of our strategy.

I look forward to hearing your comments and creative thinking as our efforts to implement an updated Urban Forest Management Plan continue.

Sincerely,



Richard Conlin
Chair, Planning, Land Use and Sustainability Committee