

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)
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Whit Bouton (Position #11 – Environmental Justice - ISA)
Jessica Jones (Position #12 – Public Health) • **Shari Selch** (Position #13 – Community/Neighborhood)

March 4, 2020.

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

RE: Ship Canal Water Quality Project

Dear Mayor and Councilmembers,

The Urban Forestry Commission (UFC) would like to thank Mike Wynne for his briefing on the tree preservation and mitigation planting efforts for Seattle Public Utilities' (SPU) Ship Canal Water Quality Project. The UFC commends the project team's inclusion of more native tree species into the project and is glad the [UFC letter Re: Comments and Recommendations for the Planting Plan for SPU Ship Canal Water Quality Program & 3rd Avenue Water Main Project dated February 14, 2018](#) was found to be helpful in developing the tree species selection.

The UFC has a few additional recommendations for SPU's consideration for not only this project, but future projects as well.

1. Trees planted as part of any project should be watered and maintained for at least 5 years after planting. This five-year establishment period is important in helping a tree survive. All projects should include budgeting for this effort, whether as part of a contractor contract or funded by the City, so that the initial investment into the tree planting is realized by healthy trees that survive in Seattle's harsh urban environment and its increasingly hot summers. Mike shared with the UFC that currently, depending on the location, mitigation trees installed as part of the project are cared for in different ways and not always for the full five-year establishment period.
2. Replacing tree canopy surface area coverage on a project site will not replace all the environmental and habitat benefits lost when existing trees are removed. Instead, replacing tree canopy volume, which includes the height of the trees, is a better method for maintaining the benefits of our urban forest, especially for coniferous trees that keep their needles year-around.

3. With the densification of Seattle, our urban trees are required to meet multiple needs as the available planting area (i.e. soil) to support healthy trees is becoming more limited. Selection of native tree and vegetation species is important while also considering climate change impacts. The UFC would also like to emphasize selecting tree and vegetation species that support habitat for Seattle's wildlife, especially its insect and bird populations.

Again, the UFC would like to share its appreciation to SPU's Ship Canal Water Quality Project team for their work promoting tree protection and replanting and for keeping the UFC abreast of project progress. This project is an example of the efforts Seattle needs to take to manage the runoff from its highly impervious urban environment. Preservation of our trees goes hand in hand with managing our stormwater runoff.

The UFC appreciates your willingness to keep it informed and looks forward to future collaboration.

Sincerely,



Weston Brinley, Chair



Sarah Rehder

cc: Jessica Finn Coven, Mami Hara, Sam Zimbabwe, Michelle Caulfield, Mike Wynne, Shane Dewald, Urban Forestry Management Team, Urban Forestry Core Team, Akshay Iyengar, Yolanda Ho, Paúl Quiñonez Figueroa

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