

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) • **Steven Fry** (Position #8 – Development)
Blake Voorhees (Position #9 – Realtor) • **Neeeyati Johnson** (Position #10 – Get Engaged)
Whit Bouton (Position #11 – Environmental Justice)
Jessica Jones (Position #12 – Public Health) • **Shari Selch** (Position #13 – Community/Neighborhood)

February 12, 2020.

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

RE: Safe Routes to Schools, Neighborhood Greenways, and the larger efforts of SDOT's Sidewalk Development & Pedestrian Programs

Dear Mayor and Councilmembers,

The Urban Forest Commission (UFC) would like to thank Brian Dougherty for his recent briefing on the efforts to prioritize and integrate trees into SDOT's Neighborhood Greenways and Safe Routes to Schools.

As Seattle continues to experience the effects of the global climate crisis, the inclusion of urban forestry in our public works projects is a critical component for building resiliency in our communities. The UFC applauds the urban forestry work SDOT programs such as these are doing to alleviate the environmental and health stressors associated with density, as well as the increasingly extreme temperature and drought events throughout the Pacific Northwest. The collective efforts made by these teams are creating more sustainable improvements to our infrastructure; addressing historic, cultural, and geographic disparities; and improving the way we travel throughout and live in Seattle. Trees further have been proven to calm traffic, encourage people to walk, and enhance the pedestrian environment by providing a tree buffer.

The UFC encourages these programs to continue, expand, and be creative. The UFC recommends incorporating snags and nurse logs throughout existing and future projects. While these projects must strive to prioritize public safety and increase accessibility, it's important to recognize the benefits of retaining local carbon stores by incorporating large woody debris whenever accessibility is not impaired, while limiting liability. The inclusion of such natural elements provides increased opportunity for nutrient cycling; promotes biological diversity; improves heavily impacted urban soils; creates essential wildlife habitat; assists in stormwater management; and decreases erosion.

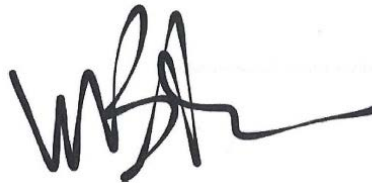
The UFC encourages public engagement and education to share SDOT's best management practices that would apply to private trees overhanging the right-of-way. SDOT Urban Forestry inspectors' information would benefit the public by ensuring accessibility; maintaining required street and sidewalk clearances; improving pedestrian safety; increasing visibility and sight lines; and promoting optimal structure and growth of new and mature plantings. Encouraging our children to walk to school along tree-lined streets fosters greater appreciation for trees and enhances children's health.

Again, the UFC extends its sincere appreciation to SDOT's Brian Dougherty, Ashley Rhead, and Shane Dewald for their championing of urban forestry through their programmatic efforts and commend the efforts of SDOT's teams for the thoughtful implementation of these projects. The UFC appreciates your willingness to keep the commission informed and looks forward to future collaboration.

Sincerely,



Weston Brinley, Chair



Whit Bouton

cc: Jessica Finn Coven, Sam Zimbabwe, Michelle Caulfield, Darren Morgan, Shane Dewald, Urban Forestry Management Team, Urban Forestry Core Team, Akshay Iyengar, Yolanda Ho, Paúl Quiñonez Figueroa, Brian Dougherty, Ashley Rhead

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