



**City of Seattle**  
Urban Forestry Commission

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**Julia Michalak** (Position #1 – Wildlife Biologist), Co-chair  
**Joshua Morris** (Position #7 – NGO), Co-Chair  
**Elby Jones** (Position #2 – Urban Ecologist - ISA) • **Stuart Niven** (Position #5 – Arborist – ISA)  
**David Moehring** (Position # 8 – Development) • **Blake Voorhees** (Position # 9 – Realtor)  
**Jessica Hernandez** (Position #11 – Environmental Justice) • **Jessica Jones** (Position # 12 – Public Health)

April 6, 2022

Seattle City Council Members  
Seattle City Hall  
600 4<sup>th</sup> Ave  
Seattle, WA 98124

RE: Ordinance 126554 Tree service provider registration

Dear City Council Members,

The Urban Forestry Commission (UFC) would like to thank you for proposing and ultimately adopting Ordinance 126554 which establishes a public registration system for tree service providers operating within Seattle and requires all tree service providers operating in the city to register by November 10, 2022. The UFC has long been supportive of this action and is pleased to see this initial step towards updating Seattle's tree protections enacted. The UFC extends extra thanks to Councilmembers Pedersen and Strauss for championing Ordinance 126554.

The UFC believes this bill will support urban forest conservation by ensuring that tree service providers are knowledgeable about and beholden to the city's tree protection regulations. By requiring that the service provider has an International Society of Arboriculture (ISA) certified arborist employed or on retainer, we can ensure that our tree care providers are knowledgeable and in compliance with American National Standards Institute (ANSI) Standards.

In addition, the new code requires that tree service providers inform their hiring entity that they are required to post a notice of tree work at least three *business* days prior to when the tree work will be initiated. The UFC supports public posting and notification of tree work because it provides an opportunity for concerned citizens to ensure that tree work will comply with the city's regulations. Relying on citizen oversight of tree regulation protections is clearly a sub-optimal means for enforcing city code. This arrangement places the burden of enforcement on citizens and neighbors as opposed to the city.

The UFC would prefer to see a city permit system in place that would help ensure that the city can track and evaluate tree removal directly as opposed to relying on voluntary compliance and citizen oversight. The UFC believes that a permit system (see existing tree removal permit requirements [here](#)) would

enable more accurate tree removal data tracking, which is essential to understanding whether tree protections are effective. The UFC believes that three business days is insufficient time for citizens to be able to review proposed work and ensure that it follows requirements. If there were a violation, citizens would need time to contact a city department. Seattle Department of Transportation posts notice 14 days in advance and the UFC believes this would be a more appropriate time frame. The UFC further recommends that a joint registration database is utilized between SDCI and SDOT.

Despite our disagreement on the appropriate time interval for tree work notification, we are overall very pleased that the City has taken this important step to ensuring that our valuable urban forest is cared for by knowledgeable and accountable tree service providers.

The UFC urges you to maintain and build on the momentum of Ordinance 126554 by prioritizing improving SDCI's proposed tree protections code update. Please do not hesitate to use the UFC as a resource in this endeavor; you are always welcome to request a meeting with commissioners or to attend any regular UFC meetings on the first and third Wednesdays of each month between 3:00-5:00 p.m.

Sincerely,



Julia Michalak, Co-Chair



Josh Morris, Co-Chair

cc: Mayor Bruce Harrell, Marco Lowe, Jessyn Farrell, Michelle Caulfield, Sharon Lerman, Urban Forestry Management Team, Urban Forestry Core Team

Patti Bakker, Interim Urban Forestry Commission Coordinator  
City of Seattle, Office of Sustainability & Environment  
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[www.seattle.gov/UrbanForestryCommission](http://www.seattle.gov/UrbanForestryCommission)

UFC acknowledges the Coast Salish peoples of this land, the land which touches the shared waters of all tribes and bands within the Duwamish, Puyallup, Suquamish, Tulalip and Muckleshoot nations. As a commission, we are continuing our work to build strong and reciprocal relationships with the Indigenous lands and peoples of this city.