



Seattle Green Spaces Coalition

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Mayor Jenny Durkan
City Hall
600 4th Ave., 7th Floor
Seattle, WA 98104

Seattle City Council
City Hall
600 4th Ave, 2nd Floor
Seattle, WA 98104

June 27, 2018

Dear Mayor Durkan and Seattle City Council Members,

We ask that you take action now to strengthen Seattle's tree ordinance – and leave a healthy legacy of trees and urban forests for all of us in Seattle today, and in the future.

Our trees and urban forests enhance property value – helping control erosion, reduce storm water runoff, provide recreational opportunities, and make neighborhoods attractive. Urban trees and forests make Seattle healthy, by providing oxygen and clearing toxins from our air. They help protect the city from climate change, counteracting the heat island effect, providing wildlife and pollinator habitat, and connecting residents and visitors with nature. In the face of unprecedented development, we need natural assets to keep Seattle sustainable, livable, equitable and resilient.

We therefore urge you to update Seattle's outdated tree ordinances and regulations:

1. To require net annual increases in Seattle's tree canopy, until the city's 30% tree coverage goal is reached. This entails maintaining and strengthening current protections for both significant and exceptional trees, tree groves, Heritage trees, environmentally critical areas and natural areas.
2. To require that all trees of 6" DBH and larger that are removed, get replaced with equivalent-sized trees (e.g. small, medium or large) -- either on site, or through payment into a City Tree Replacement and Maintenance Fund. The Fund will cover costs of replacement and maintenance mitigation. The Fund should be allowed to accept fines, donations and grants, and to pay for acquiring land and setting easements and Tree Protection Trusts.
3. To expand SDOT's program of tree removal and replacement permits, two-week notice and posting – which will cover all public and private trees 6" DBH and larger, on both public and private property, in all land use zones. Allow removal of no more than one significant, non-exceptional tree per lot per year.

4. To establish one citywide database that covers applications and permits for tree removal and replacement, and tracks changes in the tree canopy. Post online all permit requests and permit approvals for public viewing. Expand SDOT's existing tree map to show all trees in Seattle that are removed and replaced.
5. To require a detailed Urban Forest Canopy Assessment for all development projects, prior to breaking ground. This detailed tree inventory should be entered into a public database.
6. To expand SDOT's existing tree service provider's registration and certification, so it includes all tree service providers working on trees in Seattle.
7. To consolidate tree oversight into one city entity: The Office of Sustainability and Environment, which the Seattle City Auditor recommended in 2009. Give OSE the authority needed to ensure that trees have an independent advocate for their protection, to avoid conflicting goals in other city departments.
8. To emphasize native trees and vegetation, particularly conifers, to maximize sustainability and environmental services. Require the removal of invasive plants during development. Increase incentives for protecting trees, and provide public assistance for property owners who need help complying with the city ordinance. To increase compliance, increase penalties, fines and enforcement.

We support you in creating a strong Seattle tree ordinance, which will help keep our city resilient, sustainable, equitable and livable.

Sincerely,

Elaine Ike, Co-Chair / Mary K. Fleck, Co-Chair / Martin Westerman, Director
Seattle Green Spaces Coalition / info@seattlegreenspacescoalition.org

Cc: Hon. Jenny Durkan