



City of Seattle
Urban Forestry Commission

Weston Brinkley (Position #3 – University), Chair
Julia Michalak (Position #1 – Wildlife Biologist), Vice-chair
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)
David Moehring (Position # 8 – Development) • **Blake Voorhees** (Position # 9 – Realtor)
Jessica Hernandez (Position #11 – Environmental Justice) • **Jessica Jones** (Position # 12 – Public Health)
Shari Selch (Position # 13 – Community/Neighborhood)

November 10, 2021

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

RE: Mayor's Proposed 2022 Budget

Dear Seattle City Council and Office of the Mayor,

The Urban Forestry Commission (UFC) would like to provide initial thoughts and recommendations on the 2022 Budget as proposed by the Mayor. We provide below recommendations related to apparent net cuts or additions to urban forestry components of the Budget, the proposed Capital Improvement Program (CIP), and finally two proposed amendments.

In the **Mayor's 2022 Proposed Budget**:

The UFC is pleased to see Parks and Recreation receive one-time Funding for Site Restoration Expenditures of \$2,000,000 from the Cumulative Reserve Subfund (CRS-U) to restore park properties that have been severely damaged after prolonged overuse and misuse during the COVID-19 pandemic. The \$6.5 million held in reserve awaiting recommendations from the recently convened Green New Deal Advisory Board to address environmental inequities, is a tremendous achievement. The UFC looks forward to discussing ways to maximize the multiple benefits of that spending for the community and the environment.

Importantly, the UFC wants to applaud the inclusion of \$300,000 in new money for greening and improving urban tree cover in industrial spaces. These are areas of the city in most need of canopy for pollution mitigation and addressing environmental and racial inequities.

However, **the UFC was alarmed to see SDOT continue a 2021 funding reduction from \$86,000 down to \$9,000** for - BC-TR-19001 - Major Maintenance/Replacement. A \$9,000 budget for maintenance and replacement is essentially inadequate to fund even the smallest project.

In the **2022-2027 Proposed CIP**:

The UFC strongly supports the aspects of the Parks and Recreation funding, including:

- Supporting the reinvestment of 2022 REET of \$22.9 million, previously reduced during the pandemic.
- Supporting the restoring of MDP capital funds, particularly the restoration of the Land Acquisition funds.
- Supporting increasing the Urban Forestry - Green Seattle Partnership Project No: MC-PR-41012 GSP funding up from \$1,200,000 to \$1,700,000.

The UFC questions dramatic cuts to the Parks and Recreation tree and forestry funding, specifically:

- Urban Forestry – Tree Replacement Project No: MC-PR-41011 – Reduction from \$111,000 to \$95,000.
- Urban Forestry – Forest Restoration Program Project No: MC-PR-41022 – Reduction of \$135,000 a year.

These cuts are not in line with programmatic or Comprehensive Plan goals, urban forestry needs, or the general outlook of a growing budget, and we recommend identifying additional funds to close these gaps and provide justification for the reductions.

For SDOT, the UFC questions a major reduction to the Urban Forestry Capital Establishment Project No: MC-TR-C050 from \$502,000 down to \$9,000. Without funds to cover these projects coming from elsewhere a reduction of this size would decimate the SDOT and street tree program, severely impacting our city and its residents with a disproportion impact on residents that rely on street trees, such as renters.

Additionally, the UFC would like to voice strong support for **two proposed amendments to the budget**:

The first is **MO 001 A 001: “Request that MO provide recommendations regarding creating a chief arborist position”**. The UFC has advocated numerous times for the increased authority and centralization of urban forest functions within the city. The UFC sees this chief arborist position as a strong opportunity to achieve these goals. The specific request that the position “(1) advance the City's environmental justice priorities; and (2) support the goals of Resolution 31902 that established the City's intent to consider strategies to protect trees and increase Seattle’s tree canopy cover” are particularly critical to improving urban forest management at the City. The UFC also is pleased to see our efforts in partnership with City staff in developing this position description. We look forward to working together on this item.

Secondly, the UFC supports **SDCI 006 A 001: “Proviso \$865,000 in SDCI for updated tree protection regulations”**. The UFC has been advocating for a revised tree ordinance for the City of Seattle for over 12 years. Over two years ago, Resolution 31902 mandated delivering that revised ordinance. The time for delay and debate is over; the UFC supports these efforts to prioritize and deliver a revised tree protection ordinance.

Overall, the UFC looks forward to seeing the Council Budget later this week.

Sincerely,



Weston Brinkley, Chair



Joshua Morris

cc: DM Shefali Ranganathan, Adrienne Thompson, Casey Sixkiller, Michelle Caulfield, Sharon Lerman, Urban Forestry Management Team, Urban Forestry Core Team, Christina Ghan, Chase Kitchen, Yolanda Ho, Austin Miller, Maritza Rivera, Pete Holmes

Patti Bakker, Interim 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