



City of Seattle
Urban Forestry Commission

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May 5, 2021.

Shane Dewald
Seattle Department of Transportation
Urban Forestry Section, Landscape Architect's Office
700 5th Ave
Seattle, WA 98124

RE: Thank you for Permavoid presentation

Dear Shane,

The Urban Forestry Commission (UFC) would like to thank you for the hard work you and your team at the Landscape Architect's Office of the Urban Forestry section in SDOT have been doing, and continue to do, for Seattle's urban forest. The UFC appreciated your recent presentation and was excited to hear about the soil cell pilot projects being installed along NE 43rd Street and SDOT's openness to testing new technologies such as Permavoid, Silva Cell, and Stratavault. The UFC would also like to voice their appreciation to ABT for joining in on the presentation and responding to our questions.

As Seattle densifies, the public right-of-way (ROW) is continually being asked to perform a greater range of functions including maintaining accessible sidewalks; accommodating street furnishings such as benches, recycling receptacles, bike racks, mailboxes, outdoor seating for restaurants; underground utilities, and infrastructure vaults. These functions have all impacted the amount of space leftover for trees and landscape. Your team has been committed to showing that ROW space for trees isn't the leftover space, but a carefully planned component of our infrastructure and, when given proper consideration, ROW space can provide the necessary conditions for large, healthy trees. The UFC commends this pilot program to test various soil cell technologies and other materials as opportunities to provide healthier conditions for a thriving urban forest, and your continued efforts at innovation and problem solving for our street trees.

The UFC hopes to see more pilot programs like the NE 43rd Street soil cell as evaluations for technologies which benefit the city's street tree conditions. Installations such as this pilot program are complex, and opportunities for local, real-world testing don't occur every day. The UFC would like to encourage your office to share its analyses and recommendations from this and future pilot programs with other City departments and agencies who work in, or are affected by the ROW, such as Seattle Public Utilities, Seattle Parks and Recreation, and even WSDOT and the Washington State Department of Ecology.

Having SDOT's support for new technologies to enhance urban forest conditions will help accelerate their implementation in our rapidly growing city and region.

The UFC supports SDOT in their implementation of Permavoid and similar technologies and encourages other departments to embrace them where applicable. When development includes ROW improvements, the UFC also supports incentivizing installation of these technologies to further improve street tree conditions.

Additionally, the UFC encourages SDOT to introduce racial equity considerations when siting these projects to find opportunities, when appropriate, to mitigate past wrongs that have led to disproportionately lower canopy cover levels for BIPOC communities; consider potential unintended consequences of such improvements including gentrification and displacement; and consider adequate application of these technologies for successful tree establishment and longevity.

The UFC looks forward to getting updates on this project and hearing more about future pilot projects being considered. If there are additional ways in which the UFC can support SDOT in promoting improved street tree conditions we would be pleased to support those efforts.

Sincerely,



Weston Brinkley, Chair



Michael Walton

cc: Mayor Jenny A. Durkan, Council President Lorena González, CM Lisa Herbold, CM Debora Juarez, CM Andrew Lewis, CM Tammy Morales, CM Teresa Mosqueda, CM Alex Pedersen, CM Kshama Sawant, CM Dan Strauss, Sam Zimbabwe, Urban Forestry Management Team, Urban Forestry Core Team, Christina Ghan, Chase Kitchen, Yolanda Ho, Amanda Hohlfeld

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