

Commentary in Support of Urban Forestry Commission (UFC) Position:
Mixed Use and Commercial Zones Should Remain Subject to Title 11

Catherine Mushel,
UFC Secretary

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Thank you, Chair Schultz and members of the Commission, for holding this hearing.

My name is Catherine Mushel. I live at 6319 SE 34th Avenue (Portland, OR 97202). I am here to make sure the voice of UFC is counted. I know you already have the Commission's letter, which was framed by our Policy Committee and then approved by the entire Commission. My role this evening is to add public commentary.

The UFC's role is to advise the city forester and others about the urban canopy. This comes down to engaging with the public and advising decision-makers about the quality of trees and planting sites, about who should be held accountable for the canopy, about the function of trees as infrastructure and cultural assets, and about when, where, and how the canopy is distributed.

I would like to begin my commentary by asking whether everyone remembers the two acts passed by Congress passed in 1964. The Civil Rights Act and The Wilderness Act. Was this the moment that calcified the division between those committed to justice from those committed to the environment? I don't know. But recently, in reading Black Faces, White Spaces, I could see that The Civil Rights Act and The Wilderness Act might inspire those of us living in cities, not to divide our energies between the cause of green infrastructure from the cause of a just society, but rather to unite these causes and ensure that all people have access to trees where they work and live.

We know from scientific data that trees in the city are now linked with higher birth weights, less pain medication after surgery, lower crime rates when the trees are large, lower automobile speed rates and higher property values. We know that with human health, prevention saves lives and

supports quality of life and saves money. We know our health is inextricably linked to ecosystem health. We know that trees filter our water and our air and reduce the lethal heat that builds up on our streets every summer. We know, whatever our place of origin, that trees are crucial to our sense of place.

Knowing all of this, we can easily see why Urban Forestry and partners such as Friends of Trees and sister bureaus such as Bureau of Environmental Services have focused planting efforts in residential zones characterized by low canopy and by residents who have been marginalized because of race and income. With the support of Title 11, leaders supporting the urban canopy are working to add and improve canopy in residential zones in outer south and northeast to make sure everyone has canopy cover where they sleep.

But what about where you work and shop? What if you live above the shop? Do you stop breathing while at work, do you stop breathing because you live in multi-family, affordable housing unit on a busy street? To quote the mission statement from the Urban Greenspaces Institute, the Urban Forestry Commission is asking the PSC “to promote the integration of urban green infrastructure with the built environment.” For the Forestry Commission this means providing green infrastructure in the form of trees in residential, commercial, and mixed use zones, even while staying alert to future possibilities for canopy in industrial zones. Environmental justice demands no less from all of us. I am asking that the PSC support the UFC position to retain trees and tree protections through code in commercial and mixed used zones.

Thank you again for your consideration,
Catherine Mushel