

## SEATTLE URBAN FORESTRY COMMISSION

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**Shari Selch** - Position #13 (Community/Neighborhood)

January 2, 2019.

Councilmember Mike O'Brien  
Council Sustainability & Transportation Committee Chair  
City Hall  
600 4<sup>th</sup> Ave  
Seattle, WA 98124

RE: Battery Street tunnel closure opportunities

Dear Councilmember O'Brien,

The Seattle Department of Transportation (SDOT) and members of the *Recharge the Battery* community group briefed the Urban Forestry Commission (UFC) on the decommissioning of the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) tunnel below Battery Street.

The UFC recommends considering the significant future potential of these six blocks and the West Battery Portal site to support the urban forest in one of Seattle's most dense neighborhoods.

The Battery Street Tunnel's lid has precluded tree planting along Battery Street for more than 65 years. The decommissioning of the tunnel should be done in a way that does not restrict the future planting of street trees that will thrive. The UFC is concerned that the filling of the top of the tunnel below the street with cellular concrete will restrict the inclusion of street trees in future projects due to the cost of digging through the material. SDOT staff made reference to there being an opportunity to identify potential tree locations and to work with WSDOT and their contractor to determine if there is a way to fill these spaces in a different way to reduce the barrier to future tree planting. The UFC recommends SDOT pursue this opportunity and that the existing and future utility alignments be reviewed to ensure that the space is reserved for the trees.

The west tunnel portal between Western Avenue and First Avenue, also known as the Battery Street Portal site, is an area that has been identified as a [related project of the Waterfront Seattle Program](#) as a potential park to be managed by Seattle Parks and Recreation. The park would provide much needed greenspace and tree canopy in the Belltown neighborhood.

WSDOT's current plan for the block is to fill the area to match the surrounding street elevations. Filling this area will require any future work to incorporate the park to excavate and replace material with suitable fill to support plant life. The UFC recommends the City engage with WSDOT as it produces the plans for this block to minimize the City's financial burden and take advantage of this opportunity early on to promote efficiencies and maximize the potential for redeveloping the area into a park with much needed urban trees.

The UFC would appreciate remaining involved and updated on progress for this project and would be happy to engage in discussing creative solutions to make these six blocks more compliant with current Seattle street guidelines including trees.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink on a light-colored background. The signature is stylized and appears to read 'W. Brinkley'.

Weston Brinkley, Chair

cc: Mayor Durkan, Council President Harrell, Councilmember Bagshaw, Councilmember Gonzalez, Councilmember Herbold, Councilmember Johnson, Councilmember Juarez, Councilmember Mosqueda, Councilmember Sawant, Jessica Finn Coven, Linea Laird, Marshall Foster, Christopher Williams, Aaron Assis (Recharge the Battery), Jon Layzer, Michelle Caulfield, Urban Forestry Management Team, Urban Forestry Core Team, Sara Maxana, Aaron Blumenthal, Eric McConaghy, Yolanda Ho, Susie Levy, Amanda Hohlfeld

Sandra Pinto de Bader, Urban Forestry Commission Coordinator  
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