



City of Seattle
Urban Forestry Commission

Joshua Morris (Position 7 – NGO), Co-Chair
Alicia Kellogg (Position 2 – Urban Ecologist) • **Becca Neumann** (Position 4 – Hydrologist)
David Baker (Position 8 – Development) • **Nathan Collins** (Position 9 – Financial Analyst)
Timothy Randazzo (Position 10 – Get Engaged) • **Jessica Jones** (Position 12 – Public Health)
Lia Hall (Position 13 – Community/Neighborhood)

The Urban Forestry Commission was established to advise the Mayor and City Council concerning the establishment of policy and regulations governing the protection, management, and conservation of trees and vegetation in the City of Seattle

Approved meeting notes

December 11, 2024, 3:00 – 5:00 p.m.

Via Webex meeting and in-person at the
Seattle Municipal Tower, Room 1871A (18th floor)
700 5th Avenue, Seattle

(206) 207-1700

Meeting number: 2503 580 2233

Meeting password: 1234

Attending

Commissioners

Alicia Kellogg
Lia Hall
David Baker
Nathan Collins

Absent

Josh Morris – Co-Chair
Jessica Jones
Timothy Randazzo
Becca Neumann

Staff

Lauren Urgenson – OSE
Alan Guo – OSE
Sharon Lehrman – OSE

Guest

Nolan Rundquist – SDOT

Public

Steve Zemke
Jim Davis
Kevin Brown
Tina Cohen
Toby Thaler
Clay
Anne
M Manous
Bridget Moehring

NOTE: Meeting notes are not exhaustive. For more details, listen to the digital recording of the meeting at: <https://www.seattle.gov/urbanforestrycommission/meetingdocuments>

Call to order:

Lauren Urgenson called the meeting to order, conducted a roll call of the commissioners, and reviewed the agenda.

Public Comment:

Tina Cohen had a question for Nolan Runquist about an update about the Heritage Tree Program and if it is moving forward and the procedures to get a tree to become a heritage tree.

Steve Zemke mentioned the Gregg Spotts leaving as the Director of SDOT and how he has been an advocate for tree canopy, especially along Aurora. Steve mentioned that he hopes that the next SDOT Director will also work towards tree canopy advocacy. Steve mentioned that the Comp Plan has a deadline on 12/20 for public comment and urges the Commissioners to give recommendations individually as well. Steve mentioned that SDCI has GIS maps which include the 2021 Tree Inventory Map, and everyone can check their tree coverage and the accuracy of the mapping. Steve also mentioned that the mapping has layers that show critical areas. Lastly, Steve mentioned the Tree Bank Bill which calls for tree banks as large planting blocks instead of more distributed planting. Steve recommends that the Bill should be a tree planting and preservation fund.

UFC Commissioner and Coordinator updates:

Alicia Kellogg gave an update that Alicia and Josh Morris met to talk about the 2025 Work Plan and about their strategies for 2025 to simplify and move forward and how subcommittees can form out of the work plan. Alicia mentioned that there will be more information coming for commissioners to begin a brainstorming activity.

Lia Hall mentioned that they have also had conversations with Josh about the work plan and how the Commission will be more intentional towards planning. Lia mentioned a glossary of terms and summary of documents to help commissioners with onboarding.

Lauren Urgenson mentioned that there will be a retreat with the UFC in 2025 about work planning, onboarding, and process/protocols.

Urban Forestry Story Map Presentation:

Lauren gave an update on the Urban Forestry Story Map and demonstrated that the maps now show both SDOT, Parks, and some SPU tree inventory and information of trees such as owner, size, type and if it is a heritage tree.

City Tree Inventory Presentation:

Nolan gave a presentation about the SDOT Street Tree Inventory and SDOT's urban forest management (inventory and analysis, maintenance, and planting). Nolan gave an update that the tree inventory data is now available online through GIS and Tableau with some analysis available. Nolan mentioned that the tree inventory increasing from 1998 to 2025 through technology (GIS) improvements and included that over 78k trees were added during MoveSeattle Levy. Nolan mentioned the use of GIS for both data collection, customer service processes, and i-Tree Ecosystem Analysis reports. Nolan mentioned that the SDOT tree inventory suggests about \$30 million of replacement value including carbon sequestration, stormwater mitigation, and other factors. Nolan mentioned that the data is also used to analyze pest issues and develop a plan for tree-pest management.

Presentation Q&A

Lauren wanted to confirm that there are about 200,000 trees in the Tree Inventory.

Nolan responded that the Waterfront trees are not included yet and he anticipates the inventory will end up between 220,000 and 250,000.

Nathan asked about the i-Tree analysis and if the i-Tree analysis figures have been used to increase tree management services in the City.

Nolan responded that the information of the analysis has been shared to teams that ask for Council Support.

David Baker asked about how the pest observations were made and if the pest observations impact planting strategies for trees in the City.

Nolan responded that when the Emerald Ash Borer pest problem first became an issue, the City decided not to plant any ash for their projects. Nolan also mentioned that ash has been removed from the planting list in 2024. Nolan mentioned that diseases and pests are both considered when developing planting recommendations.

Lia Hall asked if there are any measure on treating these species and how trees are dealt with after removal.

Nolan responded that ash must be chipped and pesticides currently need to be run through a committee for approval. Pesticide application would be proactive injections to keep usage at a minimum.

Tina Cohen asked about street tree elm failure and best practices for Dutch Elm Disease as well as the protocol about Heritage Trees.

Nolan responded that Dutch Elm Disease practices include injecting Arbor Tech into the tree to prevent the disease and that once the disease is present, tree removal is more likely than other forms of treatment. Additionally, Nolan mentioned that he has been working on a Heritage tree work assessment and it is out for review with the Heritage Tree Committee with hopes that it will be ready for work in 2025.

Steve Zemke asked about private property trees being put on the Tree Inventory Map and if SDCI and SDOT maps are compatible with each other.

Nolan responded that the tree inventory data now includes a section for “reason for tree removal” so they can track reasons for removal in analysis moving forward. He pointed out such as development, storm damage, construction damage, death and failure to establish. Nolan also mentioned that during inventory updates, the City might notice that an entire section of street trees have been removed and a removal reason might just be “inventory update” for tree removal reasons that are unknown.

Toby Thaler asked if the tree inventory has been updated due to the “Bomb Cyclone”.

Nolan responded that there is an app coming out that shows Work Orders. Nolan mentioned that SDOT wants to combine tree inventory with the Work Order to show real-time data about inventory updates.

Alan Guo asked about how the pest identification guide would work for the public in identifying tree pests.

Nolan mentioned that Ash Borers tend to show a specific exit hole from the pest and mentioned that the trees have a very specific growth response. He also mentioned that the guide would be simplified for public to identify key tree features of pest/disease infection as well as the seasonality of infection.

Comprehensive Plan Recommendations and UFC Working Group Recap:

Lauren gave a quick recap of the November meeting and the proposed updates to the One Seattle Comp Plan. Laurent mentioned that Commissioners have met twice as a small working group to discuss

recommendations that the UFC would like to advance. Lauren provided a timeline that the UFC would need to have a special meeting by the 12/20 deadline to approve a letter of recommendation. Lauren then recapped potential areas of interest that the UFC could focus their recommendations on based on UFC and subcommittee discussion to date.

Commissioner Discussion:

Lia was curious about the revised management units and the percentage goals for each one. Lauren mentioned that each management unit in the Urban Forest Management Plan has a canopy cover goal. Combined, management unit canopy goals are intended to meet the Citywide 30% goal. Lauren mentioned any recommended updates to the management unit canopy cover goals would be included in the next update to the Urban Forest Management Plan.

Sharon Lerman mentioned that the 19-26% of canopy cover mentioned by Brennon Staley during the November meeting would apply to the approx. 10% of neighborhood residential anticipated to be redeveloped under current models.

Lia mentioned that the UFC should take into consideration what the market envisions and what housing can get developed in the future based on what incentivizes developers. David added that in his experience in housing development, he believes that developers are building to sell and prefer townhouses and 3-stacks where the unit touches the ground. He also mentioned that all condos developed, as part of a stacked flat, would be subject to Condo laws in Washington and can impact development goals.

David mentioned that he is in favor of reducing parking requirements by saving tier two trees.

Lia mentioned that they are also in favor of the existing proposed incentive to waive parking requirements in exchange for protecting a tier 2 tree. Lia also mentioned there were conversations about the 20% open space. Lia suggests highlighting that 20% should be the minimum and mentions how the space is not currently exclusive to planting.

Lia had looked into GIS layers (critical areas and repairing corridors) and how they would interplay with Urban Centers and development. Lia expressed concerns that the UFC should be aware of the history of development in Seattle as well as the need for non-human housing and contiguous canopy cover.

Lauren mentioned that the next steps for the UFC include working groups and a special meeting to approve any recommendations. David and Lia mentioned that they would like to be part of the working groups and that they should get Josh's input in the following weeks.

Adoption of meeting notes:

There was no quorum to adopt meeting notes.

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Public Comment:

Sandy Shettler mentioned impacts of the new zoning rules can be seen in South Park, with the same zoning requirements since 2019. Sandy mentioned that Portland has reached development goals while also retaining trees.

Steve Zemke mentioned that he believes people are not looking at different possibilities such as combining lots instead of splitting lots which can create larger spaces for saving trees. Steve also mentioned that Ballard lot development does not have many tree plantings because development leads

to 4-buildings to a lot. Steve urges the UFC to look creatively at different ways for lots instead of what developers have already proposed.

Toby Thaler mentioned that he had already put his comments in the chat and thanked the Commission for their work. He reemphasized Sandy's point that Seattle is unique in the way that they are developing in regard to trees.

Adjourn:

Meeting was adjourned at 5:01PM.

Meeting Chat:

Kevin Brown 12/11/2024 2:59 PM

Kevin Brown sitting in from Saanich BC (greater Victoria). We're facing the same issues as Seattle of mandated densification and how to protect the urban forest esp on private property. Looking forward to your discussion

Toby Thaler 12/11/2024 3:38 PM

Question for Nolan: Revision of inventory due to tree loss from "bomb cyclone"?

steve zemke 12/11/2024 3:46 PM

Are the trees being removed by development and private property owners able to be put in your map? Also what about replacement trees on private property- seems SDCI maps don't catch all replacement teams, all concern over Tree Service Providers frequently not giv complete data, like tree species and only in some cases list trees by Tier rather than DBH.

Tina Cohen 12/11/2024 3:47 PM

I saw a street tree elm failure, did SDOT use best practices to prevent DED with the removal?

Tina Cohen 12/11/2024 3:48 PM

Also would Nolan address if Heritage Trees are being added to the city data base. Procedure?
Thanks

steve zemke 12/11/2024 3:49 PM

Is the SDCI tree data map compatible with SDOT maps such that data can be merged? SDCI for example does not include date of removal?

steve zemke 12/11/2024 3:56 PM

Thanks Nolan for the detailed presentation and your work!

Lia Hall #13 12/11/2024 4:17 PM

also a rear porch can extend within 6 feet of 10-foot rear setback

Sandy Shettler 12/11/2024 4:25 PM

Re survival requirements--right now the code clearly states that there is no enforcement, it's a complaint-based system and people are advised to retain photographs at 5 years in case they are ever asked. Studies have shown that even very small "tree bonds"--a few hundred dollars--work to ensure survival. The City of Kenmore currently does this.

Jim Davis 12/11/2024 4:27 PM

Does the 19 to 26 percent canopy projection include a margin of error? Or is that outside of the 19 to 26 percent? For example, 19 percent with a margin of error of +/- 3 %?

Lia Hall #13 12/11/2024 4:33 PM

3-stack is a “townhome”?

steve zemke 12/11/2024 4:37 PM

In places like Ballard where townhouses have been built 4 to a lot there are almost no trees except for street trees. Following HB 1110 4 units per lot currently leaves almost no space for retaining not just large trees but most trees using basic tree protection area in Tree Protection Ordinance. Need to revisit Tree Protection Ordinance to follow ISA recommendations of ability to modify Tree Protection Areas to save trees.

steve zemke 12/11/2024 4:40 PM

Need to allow SDCI to have ability to ask for alternative site plans if it would save trees rather than let developers decide to remove trees based on basic tree protection areas as defined in SMC 25.11

Tina Cohen 12/11/2024 4:40 PM

Removing parking has an unintended consequence: cars will park up to the street corners which causes poor sight lines and increases danger to drivers, bikes and pedestrians

Toby Thaler 12/11/2024 4:44 PM

Very good discussion. However, what you are doing is responding to proposed development regulations (zoning) by OPCD and Mayor’s Office. You are identifying impacts and mitigation alternatives of those proposals. This exercise should be part of the City’s State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) process. But the City Executive is moving forward as if that process has already been done. There has been no assessment of impacts of the proposed development regulations along with specific measure to prevent or mitigate the impacts you are discussing. The Executive has put you in an untenable situation. I believe the Executive is going to put the Council in a similar position by submitting an improperly done Final EIS in January.

Sandy Shettler 12/11/2024 4:54 PM

Here is my comment for the record:

How this looks and the kind of impact it will have on people is not a mystery. You can see exactly how the projects will look in terms of trees by looking at projects in South Park, which has had these exact lot coverage, setback and tree requirement standards since 2019. Their lots are always clearcut and paved, and the "trees" that are planted are small species, planted in tiny spaces where we know they will be yanked out soon if they don't die on their own. This zoning creates dystopian heat islands.

The fact that this happened in South Park is especially hurtful because we all know that people in South Park are already dealing with excess pollution and some of the highest tree loss in the city over the past 20 years, not just in the most recent canopy study. But the answer to environmental injustice is to stop the harm, not to extend the harm to even more people.

Portland Oregon has met all its housing targets while preserving existing trees. They set aside space on each lot for trees, either 20% or 40% depending on the number of units.

You as commissioners are the only people working within City structure who are private citizens and can afford to speak the truth. Everyone else working on this plan has to go along to keep their jobs. Please be courageous.

No thanks:)

Lia Hall #13 12/11/2024 4:56 PM

Thx Tina The line of thinking there is that if parking and trees are at odds with each other, the tree should take priority

Alicia Kellogg 12/11/2024 5:00 PM
I need to hop off, thanks all!

Sandy Shettler 12/11/2024 5:01 PM
I'm getting a call so will ring off, thank you everyone for your work and caring about trees!