



City of Seattle
Urban Forestry Commission

Aaron Clark (Position 1 – Wildlife Biologist) • **Alicia Kellogg** (Position 2 – Urban Ecologist)
• **Lani Chang** (Position 3 - Natural Resource Agency or University) • **Drue Epping** (Position 5 –
Arborist) • **Tristan Fields** (Position 6 – Landscape Architect) • **David Baker** (Position 8 –
Development) • **Nathan Collins** (Position 9 – Financial Analyst) • **Timothy Randazzo**
(Position 10 – Get Engaged) • **Melanie Ocasio** (Position 11 – Environmental Justice) • **Andrea**
Starbird (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.*

Draft meeting notes

July 9, 2025, 3:00 – 5:00 p.m.

Via Webex meeting and in-person at the
Seattle Municipal Tower, Room 1872 (18th floor)
700 5th Avenue, Seattle

(206) 207-1700

Meeting number: 2503 580 2233

Meeting password: 1234

Attending

Commissioners

Aaron Clark
Lani Chang
Drue Epping
Tristan Fields
Alicia Kellogg
Andrea Starbird
Lia Hall
Melanie Ocasio

Public

(due to Webex, can only capture who spoke or wrote in chat)

Steve Zemke
Judy Akalaitis
Dave Moehring
Mike Oxman
Jennifer (no last name, added to chat)
Sandy Shettler

Absent

David Baker
Timothy Randazzo
Nathan Collins

Staff

Lauren Urgenson
Star Berry
Lisa Ciecko
Jamie Lim
Stephanie Shelton

Consultant/Facilitator: Amy Burtaine

PLEASE NOTE: Webex was not fully functional for this meeting so there are gaps in the info we can gather, and the facilitator was unable to offer detailed summary notes because there was no transcript available through Webex. For more details, listen to the digital recording of the meeting at: <https://www.seattle.gov/urbanforestrycommission/meetingdocuments>

Call to order:

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

Public Comment:

Steve Zemke

Steve discussed the need to review and amend the Tree Protection Ordinance to address increased tree loss due to proposed changes in the comprehensive plan and new zoning. He proposed several measures, including removing loopholes for tree removal, giving SDCI authority to cite tree removals, requiring tree inventories and landscape plans at the beginning of development, and implementing fees for tree removal and replanting. Steve also suggested reducing the exemption size for building site additions, allowing stacked flats in more residential zones, and incentivizing housing units with common walls to increase open space for tree retention and planting.

Judy Akalaitis

Judy urged the Urban Forestry Commission to address the critical issue of UFC's recommendation update for the Comprehensive Plan neighborhood zones. She emphasized the importance of advising the Mayor and City Council on regulations impacting the city's canopy, as per the Seattle municipal code. Judy highlighted that failing to address this issue could lead to a significant loss of canopy coverage and an ecological disaster.

Dave Moehring

Dave discussed the importance of a partnership between private land ownership and city trees to maintain tree canopy, noting that private land contributes significantly more canopy than public land. He highlighted the need for tree preservation due to budget constraints for maintaining new trees, and suggested two recommendations for the Urban Forestry Commission: reducing the basic tree protection area size and requiring alternative designs for tree protection.

Adoption of Meeting Notes from June 11

Meeting notes were reviewed and adopted.

UFC Commissioner and Liaison updates

- Lauren introduced Star Berry who will support the UFC and Sweet and Beverage Tax Community Advisory Board for the next 6 months.
- Tristan suggested adjusting the agenda to allow more time for reviewing the UFC's recommendation on neighborhood residential zones. Amy proposed moving through the UFC values, principles, and meeting agreements more quickly to accommodate this.
- Lia and Drue provided an update on a meeting they had with other commissioners to discuss sections of the proposed bill.
- Lauren introduced representatives from the Parks department who will present on their urban forestry work, as part of an ongoing series of presentations from different city departments involved in urban forestry.
- Seattle City Light to present on their urban forestry work at next month's meeting.
- SPU's Trees for Neighborhood program to present on their work in a future meeting.

Intro to Seattle Urban Forestry III (Seattle Parks and Recreation: Lisa Ciecko, Jamie Lim, Stephanie Shelton)

Lisa Ciecko, the ecology team manager at Seattle Parks and Recreation, highlighted the work of the Green Seattle Partnership. Jamie Lim, the urban forestry manager, discussed the various components of Seattle's urban forestry work, including forested natural areas and landscaped parks.

Urban Forestry Team Overview

Jamie presented an overview of her team's urban forestry work, highlighting their tree inventory system, hazard tree management, and tree planting initiatives. She explained their use of risk assessment tools and dashboard for tracking tree-related work and metrics. Jamie also discussed their storm response efforts, community tree planting activities, and challenges in sourcing trees due to rising costs and limited availability.

Green Seattle Partnership Overview

Lisa presented an overview of the Green Seattle Partnership, highlighting its 20-year history and two main goals: restoring and maintaining forested parklands in designated natural areas, and expanding community involvement in forest restoration. She described the partnership's structure, including the city of Seattle, professional crews, community volunteers, and partner organizations. Lisa showcased various programs and initiatives, such as community land care events, green job pathways, culturally connected restoration, and school stewardship work. She concluded by sharing statistics on the partnership's accomplishments, including tree installations, acres of work, volunteer hours, and participation in regional, national, and international networks focused on urban forest restoration.

20th Anniversary and Future Planning

Lisa and Stephanie highlighted the need to grow beyond the 20-year timeline and emphasized the importance of reflection and commitment. They mentioned the development of a new plan and the opportunity for input from the Urban Forest Commission. The group also discussed the use of a dashboard and Field Maps for tree management, which has been beneficial for tracking and prioritizing tree care. Lisa addressed the timeline for sharing the new plan, indicating that early draft reviews would take place in October, with potential input from commissioners.

Vote: UFC Chair/Co-Chair

Drue Epping was unanimously elected as co-chair of the Urban Forestry Commission via anonymous vote of the commissioners.

Anyone else who is interested in the position of co-chair was invited to reach out to Lauren for an orientation about the roles and responsibilities.

UFC Values, Principles, Meeting Agreements Discussion and Next Steps

- The commission discussed beginning the process of developing their vision, mission, and values
- Amy facilitated a conversation about culture building for the commission
- Lauren shared examples from other boards (Green New Deal Oversight Board and Sweet and Beverage Tax Community Advisory Board) as references
- A plan was made to form a small subgroup (2-5 people) to further develop these statements
- The commission will continue this discussion at their upcoming retreat to finalize vision and values agreements

UFC Recommendation Update: Seattle Comprehensive Plan Neighborhood Residential Zones Ordinance (CB 120993)

Lauren presented information about the Urban Forestry Commission's (UFC) previous recommendations on the Neighborhood Residential Zone ordinance. She compared these past recommendations with the current draft legislation being considered by the City Council.

Key points covered:

- Lauren reviewed the UFC's recommendation letter from December, explaining the three main categories: development standards, flexibilities/incentives, and tree planting requirements
- She clarified terminology changes (e.g., "open space" is now called "amenity area" in the legislation)
- Lauren analyzed how the UFC's recommendations aligned with the current draft:
 - The 20% minimum lot area requirement for amenity space was maintained
 - The recommendation for 100% ground-level amenity area was not adopted (still at 50%)

- The recommendation for larger minimum requirements (30-40%) was not included
- The recommendation to limit amenity areas to only trees and landscaped areas was not adopted

Lauren also began explaining the tree tier system (heritage trees, tier 2 trees of 24+ inches diameter) and how it relates to parking requirements in the proposed legislation.

Lauren sent the following to commissioners post meeting:

7/11/2025: DELIBERATIVE

[December 2024 UFC Recommendations](#) Crosswalk with [CB120993](#)

UFC Recommendation	Reference	Page
<i>Proposed development standards</i>		
Maintain requirement for at least 20% open space	23.44.110 Amenity area	69
<i>Development standard flexibilities</i>		
Maintain proposal to waive off-street parking requirements to preserve Tier 2 trees	Footnote to Table B for 23.54.015	208
Extend off-street parking waiver to preserve Tier 3 trees	Footnote to Table B for 23.54.015	208
Maintain and strengthen stacked flat bonus	Section 23.44.050, Table A; also Section 23.44.060	49
Maintain language in existing Tree Protection Code (SMC 25.11) that allows reduction of required front and rear setbacks to preserve a Type 2 tree	See SMC 25.11 , Section 25.11.070	
<i>Tree planting requirements</i>		
Maintain updated tree planting requirements based on points	23.44.120	70
Clearly define and require a minimum planting area for each canopy size category	23.44.120 under “Tree location”	72-73
Provide points when preserving a large species tree or a conifer tree, similar to points for planted trees	23.44.120, Table B	71-72
Provide points for maintaining an existing medium – large or large conifer tree even if the tree is < 6 inches diameter	23.44.120, Table B	71-72

Strengthen effectiveness of required 5-year tree maintenance for newly planted trees.	See Trees for Neighborhoods Program expansion - tree care reminders	
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Public Comment

Because the commissioners wanted more time to continue the conversation (on the cross walk that Lauren offered between the UFC's recommendations and what has been adopted into current comprehensive plan draft), commissioners elected to keep talking and forgo the final public comment period. Amy invited the public to place whatever comments they would have spoken in the chat so it could be recorded as part of the meeting.

Adjourn:

The meeting was adjourned at 4:58

Meeting Chat:

Andrea Starbird 7/9/2025 3:03 PM • Hi everyone! I'm here and listening / participating but am battling a migraine so am off-camera while I avoid too much light. Thanks for Understanding.

Judy Akalaitis 7/9/2025 3:05 PM • Hello, I would like to give public comment when that opportunity comes. Thank you.

steve zemke 7/9/2025 3:18 PM • Here is what was sent to City Council that I referenced when I spoke: *webex did not include this link or resource in the chat capture*

Judy Akalaitis 7/9/2025 3:19 PM • Will any UFC members kindly make a motion to prioritize the agenda so that the UFC Recommendation Update at 4:30 is covered first?

Steve Zemke 7/9/2025 3:20 PM • To City Council and mayor:

1. Give SDCI authority to decide on removal of Tier 3 and Tier 4 trees, not the developers as is currently done. Urban forests need to have trees of all ages to be sustainable and healthy. Give SDCI authority to ask for alternative site plans if more trees could be saved.
2. Get rid of the basic tree protection area that can't be modified. ISA says it can be and would save more trees.
3. Require lots have designated tree retention and planting areas.
4. Require a tree inventory and landscape plan be done at the beginning of the development process before approval of any building site plan is submitted.
5. The point system for planting trees on a lot allows all trees to be removed and replaced with saplings. Require that plans maximize the retention of existing healthy Trees.

6. Require all trees removed over 12" DSH pay an in lieu mitigation fee for environmental services lost to the city, as well as replanting the removed trees either on site or off site to sustain our urban forest benefits to the city.

7. Set up a Tree Replacement and Preservation Fund independent from SDCI's budget to collect in lieu mitigation fees and for public donations or grants.

8. Require all new development projects, not just principal housing units, to have street trees. This includes ADU's and building additions over 250 square feet.

9. Allow stacked flats to be built on all lots in the neighborhood residential zone, not just those over 6,000 square feet. Stacked flats would allow more open space to retain and plant trees.

10. Give incentives to build housing units with common shared walls to increase open space on lots for retaining and planting trees for environmental equity, climate resilience, reducing air pollution and stormwater runoff.

11. Consolidate urban forest oversight and maintenance in a Dept. of Climate and Environment with an Urban Forestry Division independent from SDCI and other city Departments.

12. Amend canopy cover assessment in next Tree Canopy Study to include not just canopy area but also canopy volume.

Neither the proposed Comprehensive Plan nor CB 120993 give adequate oversight or protection for maintaining a thriving healthy urban forest over the long term. The current Tree Protection Ordinance was adopted prior to the current proposed Comprehensive

Plan and new zoning proposed in CB 120993. SMC 25.11 – the Tree Protection Ordinance needs to be reviewed and amended to address the increased loss of trees and urban forest ecosystem services under the current changes proposed.

Lia Hall #13 7/9/2025 3:20 PM • I have a subgroup update unless Drue wants to speak?

Jennifer 7/9/2025 3:20 PM • I'm going to be unavailable at the next comment session:

Agree with move to prioritize OSP amendments in the agenda order.

OSP environmental impact statement still has an open appeal in the court of appeals due to failure to assess stormwater increases caused by increased tree removals and failure to include endangered species.

Recently an international panel of 31 scientists agreed we must reduce pollution, not increase it, for our critically endangered Southern resident orcas. KCDNRP, EPA, USDA, agree trees are powerful bio remediators/ bio retainers. Which helps humans as well.

Please allow the actual forestry and tree professionals on the UFC to lead the creation of the OSP amendment advisories to protect the last remaining pieces of our Pacific temperate rainforest Seattle inhabits.

Aaron Clark 7/9/2025 3:20 PM • Thanks Amy. I appreciate your support of this work.

Jennifer 7/9/2025 3:21 PM • Please read this at your soonest opportunity.

Judy Akalaitis 7/9/2025 3:24 PM • Critical items should be addressed first please.

Stephanie Shelton (she/her) 7/9/2025 3:28 PM • sorry all! Lisa start?

Dave Moehring AIA 7/9/2025 3:46 PM •

Thank you for your time, Commissioners! Recap... South Park, alone, needs 5000 new trees in order to be equitable to other neighborhoods. And all Environmental and Social Justice precincts need an additional 90,000 trees (about 1,000 canopy acres including 1/3 loss w/o 5-year maintenance). Seattle DCI is permitting over 3,000 tree removal each year on average. The two key tree regulations increasing the removal of Seattle's tree canopy:

1. basic tree protection area; adopted after June 2023
2. No longer requiring proof of viable site layout alternatives***

How can the Urban Forestry Commission make a difference as noted in SMC

3.72.020? Please consider proposing these simple edits to the Seattle Municipal

Code:

Remove the Basic Tree [Removal] Area; provision slipped in June 2023 without UFC oversight:

Strike in its entirety 25.11.070.A.1

Strike in its entirety 25.11.070.A.4.b.

Strike in its entirety 25.11.070.B.1.a.

Replace 25.11.070.B.3; Tier 1 and Tier 2 trees may be removed if necessary to construct proposed structures or to provide vehicular access to a site when parking is required by code. Tree removal under this scenario will not be authorized if viable alternatives existed that would allow adequate protection of the tree during construction according to Seattle Municipal Code 25.11.060.

Within 25.11.070.B.2.a.: Strike "If an applicant chooses to" and replace with "An applicant is required to..." Without the 7,000 canopy acres within Seattle's Residential land, our long-term canopy would be reduced in half yielding significant urban heat islands. Not likely, but even if Seattle would find land area to double its 3,500 canopy acres within public rights-of-way (without retaining or adding private land tree canopy), our city's canopy coverage would be less than 20%... similar to Tacoma. The good news is that, like Portland OR, we can aim to achieve 20% canopy within developed lots and over 40% canopy within public areas.

Lisa Ciecko (she/her), Seattle Parks and Recreation 7/9/2025 3:52 PM • Thanks for having us!

Tristan Fields (she/her) 7/9/2025 3:53 PM • Thank you, Lisa, Jamie, and Stephanie

Amy Burtaine 7/9/2025 3:59 PM • We will start again at 4:03

Sandy Shettler 7/9/2025 4:04 PM • Thank you Drue!!

Lia Hall #13 7/9/2025 4:04 PM • Thanks, Drue!

Andrea Starbird 7/9/2025 4:04 PM • Thank you, Drue!

steve zemke 7/9/2025 4:05 PM • Congratulations Drue!

Dave Moehring AIA 7/9/2025 4:05 PM • For canopy distribution, see Figure 11 on page 33. Link here - 2021 Tree Canopy Assessment Report_FINAL_230227.pdf; this assessment has been updated under UFC recommendation every 5 years (i.e., 2026).

Drue (Arborist #5) 7/9/2025 4:09 PM • I like this from green new deal: We respect and approach intersectionality and cultural preservation as assets to bring about unity and creativity from various perspectives and differences to our work.

Andrea Starbird 7/9/2025 4:10 PM • This feels very critical to our work on the UFC, from the GND also: "We listen and are guided by frontline communities."

steve zemke 7/9/2025 4:11 PM • Check purpose and mission in Seattle Ordinance 123052 <http://clerk.seattle.gov/search/ordinances/123052>

steve zemke 7/9/2025 4:13 PM • Ordinance 123052 - AN ORDINANCE relating to the creation of an Urban Forestry Commission to advise and make recommendations to the Mayor and City Council and establishing a new Chapter 3.72 of the Seattle Municipal Code in connection therewith.

Sandy Shettler 7/9/2025 4:19 PM • Amendments to this bill are due on July 15, which gives Council Central Staff time to ensure they are congruent with existing legislation and also for the Law Dept to review, in time for voting in September.

Sandy Shettler 7/9/2025 4:26 PM • +In contrast to "amenity area" Portland requires a "tree density area" which is dedicated to tree retention or planting. It may be confusing to use the term "amenity" which could be any outdoor feature.

Drue (Arborist #5) 7/9/2025 4:28 PM •
<https://seattle.legistar.com/View.ashx?M=F&ID=14259645&GUID=FE3EB908-D7DC-4A1B-A948-DBF57C5A2AF7>
link to it^

Drue (Arborist #5) 7/9/2025 4:34 PM • Tier 2 tree info:
<https://www.seattle.gov/dpd/codes/dr/DR%207-2024.pdf>

Sandy Shettler 7/9/2025 4:34 PM • Re Tier 1 Heritage Trees: there are 256 of them and the program is defunct, so no more can be added. The program may be restarted next year. When this program was extant, about 1 tree per month is added to this category.

Andrea Starbird 7/9/2025 4:37 PM • Not to get into the weeds too much, but the Tier language is nuanced. There are many Tier 2 trees that are not based on size alone, but also species. For example, a vine maple is a Tier 2 tree at 8-inches, and Pacific madrone is Tier 2 at 6-inches. Further, four species (Red Alder, Lombardy poplar, Black Cottonwood and Bitter Cherry) are never Tier 2 trees regardless of their size; Tier 2; does not always mean large, it's a little misleading /confusing, unfortunately.

Tristan Fields (she/her) 7/9/2025 4:40 PM • More information about trees and sizes: Tree age and size vary greatly depending on species and growing conditions, but a general rule of thumb is that a 12-inch diameter tree may be around 20 to 30 years old, while a 24-inch diameter tree might be 40 to 60 years old. These estimates assume a moderate growth rate of approximately 0.5 inches in diameter per year, common among many urban species like maples, lindens, or elms in temperate climates. Fast-growing trees like poplars and willows may reach those sizes much faster, while slow growing species like oaks could take significantly longer. In urban environments, the average lifespan of a street tree is relatively short—typically 20 to 30 years—due to stressors such as soil compaction, limited root space, air pollution, and mechanical damage. In contrast, the same species in a park or natural setting might live 50 to 100 years or more.

steve zemke 7/9/2025 4:46 PM • Stacked flat limited to 6000 square feet is less than 40% of NR zones lots I believe. Lot size numbers are in ADU EIS done prior 2020. No reason stacked flats can not be on all lots.

Sandy Shettler 7/9/2025 4:47 PM • Comments need to be done as soon as possible. Councilmembers' amendments are due on 7/15. After that, comments will not likely have an influence on the legislation.

Tracy Burman 7/9/2025 4:47 PM • Amendments are due 7/15 - if you want changes to this legislation.

Sandy Shettler 7/9/2025 4:48 PM • I don't believe that is accurate. The legislation needs to have a 30-day advance public hearing. September is the final vote, after the final public hearing, which had a 30-day notice.

Dave Moehring AIA 7/9/2025 4:48 PM • September is too late to make amendments from what Council Members Robert Kettle's newsletter indicated a few days ago.

steve zemke 7/9/2025 4:48 PM • Amendments are being considered now. Council typically does not meet in August. Need amendments now to be considered in most cases.

Amy Burtaine 7/9/2025 4:50 PM • Public comments please add here to the chat.

Michael Oxman 7/9/2025 4:50 PM • Bylaws require 2 public comment sessions.

Dave Moehring AIA 7/9/2025 4:51 PM • Seattle's Comprehensive Plan 2025 - Council | [seattle.gov OneSeattlePlanPermanentStateZoningComplianceDirectorsReport.pdf](#)

steve zemke 7/9/2025 4:52 PM • Commission previously met twice a month and has called special meetings, consider coming up with something as soon as possible.

steve zemke 7/9/2025 4:55 PM • Why not call a meeting for July 23rd Wed to come up with recommendations. That gives 2 weeks to pull the letter together.!

Sandy Shettler 7/9/2025 4:55 PM • A note on the uptake of the previous UFC comments, there was no change to the amenity area requirement, and it does not currently require any trees. The "tree requirements" are entirely separate, and are 65% reduced from previous NR tree requirements. Thank you for working on this.

Michael Oxman 7/9/2025 4:56 PM • Please use the proper term, ISA Certified Arborist. Only people holding this credential can serve as the arborist representative on the commission. Last month we were asked to keep chat comments short, so we didn't "disrespect" the commissioner's time. Which is it?

Melanie Ocasio 7/9/2025 4:57 PM • Regarding preserving trees - I think it's important that the trees that are preserved are healthy. With construction/development tree trimming is common, and with more than 30% gone this create an unstable and potentially hazardous situation for neighborhoods

steve zemke 7/9/2025 4:57 PM • Very unlikely Council will consider amendments in Sept as they need to out to the public for comment before a vote.

Tristan Fields (she/her) 7/9/2025 5:00 PM • Good luck with your book, Amy!