

SEATTLE URBAN FORESTRY COMMISSION

Tom Early, Chair • Steve Zemke, Vice-Chair
Weston Brinkley • Leif Fixen • Mariska Kecskes • Donna Kostka • Richard Martin • Joanna Nelson de Flores
Erik Rundell • Andrew Zellers

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

May 11, 2016

Meeting Notes

Seattle Municipal Tower, Room 2750 (27th floor)
700 5th Avenue, Seattle

Attending

Commissioners

Tom Early – chair
Steve Zemke – vice-chair
Leif Fixen
Donna Kostka
Joanna Nelson de Flores
Erik Rundell
Andrew Zellers

Staff

Sandra Pinto de Bader - OSE

Public

None

Absent- Excused

Weston Brinkley
Mariska Kecskes
Richard Martin

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

Call to order

Tom called the meeting to order, took roll call and read the UFC’s mission and the agenda.

Public comment

None.

Chair report

We are going to work on setting up a meeting with City Council to follow up the letter about Parks policy. Planning on going to the tree walk on the Admiral City.
Leif went to the Eastlake tree walk last week.
Donna, Steve, and Leif will be going to the Urban Forestry Symposium next Tuesday.

Adoption of April 13 meeting notes

ACTION: A motion to approve the April 13 meeting notes as written was made, seconded, and approved.

Seattle University Master Plan – Lara Branigan (Seattle University)

Lara Branigan is the director of design and construction for Seattle University.

The campus is located between Broadway and 15th. The parking lot site is the location they are developing through a private development for student housing.

The campus was founded in 1892. It's a 48 acre campus. They have 55% open space with a goal to increase to 57%.

Landscape practices:

- Designated a backyard wildlife sanctuary in 1989
- Designated as a wildlife habitat in 2007
- Landscape managed without pesticides since 1986
- Committed to the use of native drought tolerant plants and minimal irrigation
- Gardens planted with edibles and welcome the community to take advantage of this

Tree inventory

Environmental Impact Statement prepared as part of MIMP process June 2008

- Full tree inventory performed
- Report on 18 trees of Noteworthy importance
- Four groups of trees potentially meet the criteria of 'grove'
- No City of Seattle Class AAA-1 Heritage trees on or near campus
- No formally designated exceptional trees' on campus
- No record of existing rare plants or high quality ecosystems on or near campus

MIMP requirements

DCI condition: construction related impacts to trees may be substantial; therefore approval is conditioned on meeting the mitigation measures in FEIS Section 3.2.4

FEIS 3.2.4 requires the following mitigation measure for construction:

- Siting of construction "would attempt to avoid significant trees and groves
- Trees that must be removed for projects shall be replaced consistent with SMC 25.11 and the adopted Director's Rule.

SC 25.11.090 states that exceptional trees and trees over 2 ft. in diameter that are removed in association with development shall be replaced by one or more trees, as approved by the City. No tree replacement shall be required if the tree is hazardous, unhealthy or relocated to another suitable planting site approved by the City.

UC question: do you have a tree replacement policy?

Answer: not a formal policy but we do replace, relocate, and plant. Some of the larger trees to be removed are given to Big Trees to take them and plant them elsewhere.

They are proposing a 105 ft building that would go boundary to boundary. Along the site there are three street trees on Madison.

Street Trees:

- Two maples = *Acer rubrum* “Doric”
- One Norwegian Sunset Maple – *Acer truncatum* x *A. platanoides* “keithsform”
- Per Bill Ames site visit all are healthy; some pruning is recommended.
- Power lines do run through the canopies so it is possible SCL may perform extensive pruning in the future.

Site trees:

- Arborist’s Report commissioned April 2016 identified 9 significant trees on site:
- 6 grey poplars – *Populus Canescens*
- 3 black locust – *Robinia pseudoacacia*

Tree condition

- Poplars: usual longevity is 50-70 years. Trees 1-3 are estimated to be 80 years old. Trees 4-6 are estimated to be 40-50 years old.
Observed crown die-back, embedded bark, and internal decay.
Recommendation: trees are not ‘high retention value’ trees and are in or nearing end-of-life ‘mortality spiral’
- Black locust: trees 7-9 mature, multiple trunks. Tree 9 has been heavily pruned. Observed leaning trunks ‘over over-extended lateral branches’, Recommendation: trees are not ‘high retention value’ trees. Bill Ames noted ‘numerous point of decay’ on tree 9 adjacent to the ROW and asked that it be removed.

There is a vacated street (Madison Court) that still has vehicular traffic. They are planning on truly vacating turning it into a pedestrian environment for adjacent student housing.

UFC comment – the UFC could issue a letter supporting this initiative if this were to help. Contact Sandra if need a letter.

Proposed Plan

The project proposes removal of all site trees and retention of the street trees.

Site trees over 24” in diameter per Arborist’s report.

Tree 1: Poplar – 42” DBH, over mature, top decline

Tree 2: Poplar – 40” DBH, over mature top decline

Tree 3: Poplar – 40” diameter, over mature, top decline

Tree 9: Locust – 13, 25, 24” DBH trunks, recently pruned, poor form

Due to the health of the large trees, replacement is not required by SMC 25.11 Madison Court will be redeveloped into a pedestrian mall with associated landscape improvements.

Campus is part of the pollinator pathway.

UFC question/comment: do you keep track of how many trees you take out and how many you plant? You might be planting more than you might think.

Answer: the gardeners might already be doing that. Seattleu.edu/grounds is their website.

Lara invited the UFC to a walking tour. Sandra will follow up and organize a visit.

MIMP letter of recommendation - discussion continues and possible vote

This letter has unsolicited suggestions for updating the MIMP process. The intent is to bolster trees as Major Institutions update their plans.

Commissioners discussed the new iteration. Tom will incorporate input and provide a new iteration for the Commission to consider.

ROWIM discussion continues

The new version looks much better than the prior iteration. Tom only has one recommendation. The document itself has many references to trees, canopy, and street trees. The one thing they don't talk about is tree soil volume and canopy space.

The Commission discussed, edited and adopted the letter.

ACTION: A motion to approve the ROWIM recommendation as amended was made, seconded, and approved.

Public comment

None

New business and announcements

The Commission debriefed on the Forterra breakfast.

Green Seattle Day will be November 12.

Sandra will check back with Future Queen Anne regarding their appeal and with SDCI about ECA update.

Adjourn

Public input:

From: Steve Zemke [mailto:stevezemke@msn.com]

Sent: Monday, May 16, 2016 12:28 PM

To: Herbold, Lisa

Cc: Pinto de Bader, Sandra; Bagshaw, Sally

Subject: Urban Forestry Canopy Impact Assessment

To Councilmember Lisa Herbold:

Hi Lisa,

Thanks for your offer at the Seattle Neighbor Coalition meeting on Saturday to bring up the issue of asking DPD to assist the city in quantifying tree loss and gain during development by requiring the gathering of information through what is commonly called an Urban Forest Canopy Impact Assessment on development projects when you take up the

appointment of Samuel Assefa as Director of the Office of Planning and Community Development at Tuesday's meeting of the Planning, Land Use & Zoning Committee.

Here is the link to the letter the Seattle Urban Forestry Commission sent to the Seattle City Council, Mayor and Department of Planning and Development on May 25, 2014 regarding additional reporting by DPD on the impact of development on the urban forestry canopy.

<http://www.seattle.gov/Documents/Departments/UrbanForestryCommission/FinalIssuedDocuments/Recommendations/ADOPTEDDPDReportingLetter062514.pdf>

The first item on an updated canopy assessment is being addressed with an evaluation in progress with the county in a region wide assessment that Seattle participated in earlier this year with an aerial flyover using LIDAR.

The second item, asking DPD to quantify tree removals has not been addressed to my knowledge. I think logically it should cover all zoning, not just single family zoning. The Urban Forestry Commission and the city currently has no way to quantify the impact of tree loss during development across the city on the city's goal of increasing tree canopy from the last canopy assessment of about 23% to the 30% goal by 2037.

As noted on the third page of the letter:

"What would help the city better understand what is happening with the tree canopy protection and enhancement is to require that all development projects submit an Urban Forest Canopy Impact Assessment prior to any construction project being approved. The Urban Forest Canopy Impact Assessment would include a map of the property with the trees numbered, canopy area of trees drawn and trees to be removed clearly labeled. Under current guidelines it would minimally require that all trees 6 inches DBH (diameter at breast height) or larger be inventoried on the property."

The letter notes that the information on tree loss and gain could then be included in the Urban Forestry Commission's annual report.

Again thank you for considering this issue. Unfortunately I will not be able to attend the hearing tomorrow as I will be at an all day Urban Forestry Symposium on Density and Trees at the University of Washington so I appreciate your help in bringing up this issue.

Steve Zemke
Chair - Friends of Seattle's Urban Forests

Note - this letter is written by me as representing the Friends of Seattle's Urban Forest and not the Seattle Urban Forestry Commission of which I am a member but I have not had a chance to run this letter by them in the current time frame.

cc: Sally Bagshaw, Sandra Pinto de Bader