

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

July 13, 2016

Meeting Notes

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

Attending

Commissioners

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

Staff

Sandra Pinto de Bader - OSE
Steve Pearce – Office of the Waterfront

Guests

Philip Stielstra

Absent- Excused

Leif Fixen
Richard Martin
Weston Brinkley

Public

Elaine Ike

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, read the UFC’s mission and today’s agenda.

Public comment

Elaine Ike – She is with Seattle Green Spaces Coalition. Would like to speak positively about the championing of Meyers Parcel by the UFC. These are 33 acres of open space. The last large parcel the City owns. Nearby neighborhoods of White Center, South Park, and Georgetown would be affected by air quality impacts. It’s important to consider the Equity and Environmental Agenda, use of the property should be consistent with City’s goals provide opportunities for green jobs and public benefits. If the land is sold, the Hamm creek watershed and the Duwamish River will be affected. Representatives from all the diverse communities should be engaged in a meaningful visioning process. Very few of those people were represented at the recent public meeting. Outreach needs to be multi-lingual and multi-cultural.

Pike Pine Streetscape project

Steve Pearce, from the Office of the Waterfront presented the project team's initial ideas around pedestrian improvements on Pike and Pine Streets between First Avenue and Melrose Avenue on Capitol Hill.

This project will create high-quality pedestrian connections between Capitol Hill and the Pike Place Market, capturing the spirit of the Pike-Pine Renaissance Streetscape Design Vision (a plan commissioned by the Downtown Seattle Association), and achieving place-making goals in tandem with improving the safety and quality of the pedestrian experience. The project will be led by the City's Office of the Waterfront, as part of the Waterfront Seattle Program. Funding will be through the Waterfront Local Improvement District (LID). The project budget is \$20M (covering all costs, including design, construction and City costs). The consultant design contract (concept design through final design) is expected to be up to \$2.1M.

The streetscape project will primarily focus on the pedestrian environment – sidewalks and crosswalks. The project will coordinate closely with multimodal corridor improvements being planned for a longer corridor on Pike and Pine streets extending from First Avenue to 15th Ave. The project is being led by SDOT's Project Development Division. The multimodal project will is expected to be performed under a future separate SDOT contract.

The project potentially includes: new sidewalks or sidewalk extensions, curb bulbs, crosswalk paving inlays, intersection treatments, drainage and green stormwater infrastructure, street trees, planting, lighting, seating (fixed and movable), transit shelters and infrastructure (including real time information signs and Orca card readers, bike racks, bike share stations, public art and wayfinding elements. Demand for street space by transit, bicycles, general purpose traffic and passenger loading functions will likely limit extensive widening of sidewalks on Pike and Pine, but adding sidewalk area in some locations will be explored. On the bridges over the I-5 freeway, noise barriers and green walls may be considered. Key corridor-wide improvements should be implementable without significantly disrupting existing hardscape. For example, these elements might include supplemental lighting, public art, paving inlays vertical elements, seating and wayfinding. A more detailed scope of improvements will be defined as part of the initial 10% design.

UFC question/comment: How do trees fit into the plan?

Answer: trees are very important and improve the pedestrian experience. Have good existing trees on the streets, will work to preserve them and add to them through project design. The project will be following the City's existing policies and codes. The project team works closely with the Urban Forestry Division in SDOT. They are very aware of the importance of trees in making a successful street. The project will supplement trees with lower level plantings. Probably won't be able to plant trees over the freeway due to the structures. In that area the project might involve public art, green walls and other components to protect pedestrians as they cross the bridge. They are just at the beginning of the project and don't have a design team in place yet. Once the team is in place they'll tour the site to see what's in place as a first step.

UFC question/comment: the UFC saw the initial visioning document where avenues were going to be for trees and streets for views. If streets were clear for views it would cause a 'brutal' environment. Trees can frame the view they are after.

Answer: There were a number of things that were problematic in that document. Probably would have been modified if the document had undergone City review. They are not starting with the Vision for East/West

streets. They are looking at existing policies and codes and believe that trees are appropriate on every street downtown.

UFC question/comment: the reality is that there is a lot of air pollution, and the heat island effect downtown. Trees also have a calming effect on traffic.

Answer: I agree with everything you just said. There are studies showing that trees provide a calming effect on people and bus wait times are perceived to be shorter if you are surrounded by trees.

UFC question/comment: Will there be enhancement of street conditions to accommodate larger trees. Is that part of the current project?

Answer: there are parts of the corridor that have areaways. They always comply with the Right-of-way Improvements Manual (ROWIM) when they are rebuilding a street. The ROWIM calls for adequate soil volumes for trees.

UFC question/comment: Would an approach like the one used on Bell Street be considered?

Answer: the idea of a shared street is interesting.

UFC question/comment: is there an expected net gain of trees?

Answer: it's hard to comment on that at this point. The only reason to replace a tree would be if it's not healthy. There are not many utilities to be relocated, so there shouldn't be a need to remove trees. There are opportunities to add trees.

UFC question/comment: Currently "Green Streets" are not really related to trees in SDOT terms. It would be nice if trees were included into the description of Green Streets.

Answer: the idea is to take streets from major transportation options to transit and other modes, but agree that it's confusing.

Trees, WOW!

Philip Stielstra – wants to share pictures and stories with the UFC.

He went on a tree climbing expedition that ended up being more than that. The idea is to save the genetics of large trees. People climb the trees to obtain genetic material to clone and duplicate these giants that have thrived for thousands of years.

Trees are directly linked to climate change. Global warming and droughts make trees suffer, yet trees can help with the problem. Philip created a blog to share his experiences. See links provided in his presentation and handout.

UFC question/comment: a way to engage residents is through the Tree Map. That would help people realize the value of trees.

Myers Parcels letter of recommendation – discussion and possible vote

Commissioners discussed the draft letter.

A new iteration of the letter will be discussed at the August 3 meeting.

Discussion items:

- **Backyard cottages and impacts to trees - Move to August 10**
- **UF budget – Move to August 10**

2016 UFC Work Plan update and possible vote – Move to August 10

Public comment:

None

New Business:

None

Adjourn

Community input:

Comments on the proposed Colman Park Vista project - July 2016

Attn: **Pamela Kliment – Planner** Seattle Parks and Recreation

Please accept the following comments into the record for the Vista Project. They have no particular order or priority.

The permanent conversion of a forested Natural Area into a vista contradicts numerous City policies and regulations. See below.

The entire 24 acres Colman Park has been designated and managed as an urban Natural Area for decades. At least a million dollars have been spent in Coleman Park alone to restore and establish a native conifer forest. The Farris settlement and the Starflower Foundation are a few of the major contributions. Project proponents claim the west slope of Colman Park is not a designated Natural Area due to the citywide reclassification of all Parks property in 2015. Where are the Supplemental Use Guidelines for all our former Natural Areas?

Another management document overlooked is the Lake Washington Boulevard (LWB) – Vegetation Management Plan (2008) prepared for Seattle Parks Department which clearly states if a Park such as Coleman does not have a Plan then the Boulevard VMP should be used as the management tool until a park specific VMP is created. (see Page 9). The VMP refers to the indigenous slope forest within Colman Park as the dominant natural element. The topping and removal of trees along the west slope compromises the integrity of the Boulevard vegetation and the intent of the VMP.

VMP design intent objectives and goals identify preserving and enhancing the ecological continuity and only provide views from within the Parks and not from adjacent parcels or right-of-ways. Sheet #21 and #22 of the VMP show a total of 3 viewpoints from the Boulevard within Coleman Park.

Major vegetation planning and restoration work was completed prior to the LWB-VMP in the lower portions of the Park by funding from the Starflower Foundation to reestablish a native conifer dominant forest.

Urban forestry goals have also been created to protect and enhance vegetation in natural areas. The Green Seattle Partnership includes the western slope of Colman Park in its restoration efforts as part of a citywide plan. Planting of evergreen trees is outlined for reclaiming areas such as the neglected west slope of Colman.

The last goal of the forestry program is to gain community appreciation for the benefits of trees and engagement in caring for trees. The Colman Vista proposals fails on both counts and should not move forward as envisioned.

The trees on the western slopes of the Boulevard have not been inventoried and was considered high priority in 2008 and again in 2011 as part of the Green Seattle Partnership – Forest Monitoring Program.

The Boulevard corridor including Colman per the LWB VMP should be managed for wildlife habitat by increasing diversity in the forest structure and function.

The Olmsted design intent was to retain a wild and natural aesthetic and to create a buffer from the cities' urban structures using evergreens.

The Colman Vista proposal is misleading by the use of the term "restoration" given the site was originally an ancient conifer forest dominated by trees likely well over a hundred feet tall. Early drawings and photographs indicate the slopes surrounding Lake Washington were covered primarily in fir, cedar, hemlock and madrone.

Green Seattle Partnership has currently enrolled the entire Colman Park. The design intent for the slopes is to be managed as a forested parkland. The target forest type for GSP restoration is mixed conifer dominated by Douglas Fir. Millions of tax dollars have been earmarked to fully fund the GSP program citywide and complete the forest restoration of slopes including upper Colman. The most urgent need is to develop a comprehensive vegetation management plan for the entire 24 acres of Colman and not to piecemeal individual sections. The Starflower work with Charles Anderson was a great start beginning around 1996 and continuing thru 2007 but only covered about 10% of the Park.

For vegetation restoration projects greater than 1,500 sf in a critical area such as the Colman steep slopes, SEPA review is required. This would include the impacts from the proposed 20+ feet wide trail corridor clearing suggested in all alternatives.

During the most recent presentation by the Friends of a Vista consultants on June 6th the public was shown only one option for trail construction and maintenance. A 6-foot wide trail surface with a 24-foot wide clearing for a view corridor was presented. No mention was made of Seattle Parks trail standards or other options to minimize impacts along trails. The trail plan also included a new segment of trail across the slope at the base of the SW stairway. This trail segment (approximately 250 lf) is currently not part of the Seattle trails system but has been presented as being well established. No studies have been done to establish a need for this additional trail and currently there is no funding for any component of the Vista project. Who will be responsible for the long-term maintenance of the trail system?

Mt Baker Ridge Viewpoint Park – 2015 DON Grant for preserving views thru Invasive Vegetation Control - \$13K + match for "This project will remove black locust saplings and other invasives, restoring the native habitat and preserving the view corridor. Also we will complete a small amount of replacement planting." Appears to bring into question long term funding for maintenance of viewpoints. Responsibility of the Park Department or private funding and not other City Departments such as DON.

Colman Vista received DON grant funding as well. No mention of views or vistas. As follows: Restore Colman "Park's West Slope to Olmsted Design - Colman Park Restoration Project: This project will continue ongoing efforts to engage the community in the development of a vegetation plan for the west slope of Colman Park. Consultants will be hired to work with the community and Parks to develop a specific actionable plan to restore historic vegetation in this heritage Park. \$23,500.00 ". Raises questions of misinformation and misleading requests. The main objective has been from the beginning is to permanently remove native trees and vegetation just as the early loggers did prior to the Olmsted visit to Seattle.

During a Friends of Seattle Olmsted Parks meeting in May of 2014 the Colman Vista proponents presented their project in order to seek support from the FSOP organization to create a viewpoint along 31st. Surprisingly, a FSOP Board Member, who is also currently an acting Seattle Parks staff Ecologist, offered to coach the neighborhood Vista group thru the planning process. He suggested they avoid the use of viewpoint and instead refer to the project as a "restoration". It was also made clear they would likely not be able to eliminate entire trees and would need to follow Park standards where generally no more than 25% of the coppiced maple stems should be removed. It appears the term "restoration" was altered to include views and the existing trees were deemed disposable. Should not Parks Ecologists be protecting and preserving our natural areas and trees?

Seattle has numerous viewpoints overlooking Lake Washington with several in the Colman neighborhood. During the late 1990's policy was developed around viewpoint creation and Parks has currently limited the number in the City. Viewpoints are **from** public places consisting of specified viewpoints, parks, scenic routes, and view corridors. The 31st Ave South arterial travel corridor above Colman Park which is owned by SDOT does not appear to meet these criteria. Numerous views of distant mountains and waterways are available within easy walking distance from the project site with the most recent addition being the Mt Baker Ridge Viewpoint to the north several blocks.

Tree topping is prohibited according to the 2001 City Tree Policy 060-P 5.6.1 Section 4.4

We are currently lacking a Senior Urban Forester with the Parks Department for making Tree Policy decisions.

Loss of canopy coverage will require mitigation and planting will be required to match or exceed the loss of mature canopy. See Tree Policy 6.5.3 Begs the question of where the matching canopy will be created.

Have the partnerships been involved in light of Seattle Tree Policy 6.5.1 ? where it states: "Does the scope of work have the potential to achieve enhancement of the vegetation resource for public benefit, specifically with regards to policies presented in Section 4 concerning tree protection, tree replacement, wildlife habitat, slope stability, and partnerships."

Friends of Vista website is misleading. Especially the images. The front page image of Mt Rainier is from some nearby location and not from Colman Park. Also, it does not appear as if a view of Rainier is even possible from 31st Ave above Colman Park. Another image on page #5 of the website from 1991 was taken from private property across the street and at an elevation not available to the public. This is somewhat misleading to assume the public will be able to enjoy these "restored" views. Obviously any vegetation clearing will benefit the private property owners along 31st given the current tax structure in King County which rewards view property.

On page #6 of the website www.colmanparkvista.com there are several images of what are described as Maple stump suckers. Why is there not a City staff arborist making an unbiased assessment? The image on the right is not a Maple (acer macrophyllum) stump but rather our native beaked hazelnut which naturally grows in a multi-stemmed form. Again the proponents are misinforming the reader, this time in regards to forest health and native plantings.

This portion of 31st Ave has been claimed to be a "scenic drive" by proponents. This appears to be misleading. Mapping done for the 1987 Open Space Policies as well as the Scenic Routes designated by the Seattle Engineering Department in Ordinance 97027 do not include the segment of 31st Ave west of Colman Park. Lake Washington Blvd within Colman Park is clearly designated as a Scenic Route and extensive views are available both within and outside of the Park from the Blvd as envisioned by the Olmsted Brothers.

During the June 6th Friends of a Vista group presented to the public, "Full and Immediate" removal of vegetation as the desired end result on the western slope of Colman Park below 31st Ave. The City Tree Policy was never discussed and the proponents claimed there is not a VMP applicable to the slope.

On page #13 of their presentation they quote a 1910 letter from the Olmsted brothers regarding clearing of "wild growth". They did not follow-up by mentioning the same letter states: "The steep slopes along the drive and borders of the Park should be carefully planted with trees and shrubs". The focus of this project has been on removing trees from the beginning of the process. A plan sketch developed by the Olmsteds in 1910 shows existing trees mapped throughout the Park including the area now permanently converted to a Pea Patch. I'm sure the Olmsted Brothers did not envision a Pea Patch in the middle of their Park and the clearing created by the Patch simply begets more tree removal. The plan also shows extensive planting of trees along the borders of the Park including along 31st Ave S. The Olmsted planting palette was never developed for the Park but the LWB-VMP and other Olmsted supporting documents indicate Douglas Fir, Red Cedar, Western Hemlock, Madrone, Spruce, Grand Fir, White Pine and other conifers were to be used.

Also of note is the Colman Park kiosk at the lakeside with information regarding the Olmsted vision. Primary to their design was "A place to get away from the bustle and jar of the streets". Yet this appears to be in direct conflict with the proposed creation of an open Vista from the busy 31st Ave where passing traffic might be able to "steal" a quick view.

Thank you for taking these comments into consideration.
All the Best!

Darrell Howe
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