

## SEATTLE URBAN FORESTRY COMMISSION

Tom Early, Chair • Steve Zemke, Vice-Chair  
Weston Brinkley • Leif Fixen • Reid Haefer • Craig Johnson  
Joanna Nelson de Flores • Sarah Rehder • 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*

**August 9, 2017**

### Meeting Notes

Seattle Municipal Tower, Room 2750 (27<sup>th</sup> floor)  
700 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue, Seattle

#### Attending

##### Commissioners

Steve Zemke – vice-chair  
Leif Fixen  
Andrew Zellers

##### Staff

Sandra Pinto de Bader - OSE  
Lisa Rutzick - SDCI  
Vera Gianpietro - OPCD  
Brennon Staley - OPCD

#### Absent- Excused

Tom Early – chair  
Weston Brinkley  
Meghan Herzog (non-voting)  
Craig Johnson  
Joanna Nelson de Flores  
Reid Haefer  
Sarah Rehder

##### Guests

Andrew Schiffer

##### Public

None

**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

Steve called the meeting to order.

#### Public comment

None

#### Adoption of July 5 and July 12 meeting notes

Due to lack of quorum, this item was moved to the next meeting.

#### Design Review Board

Lisa Rutzick manages the Design Review Program. Lisa works with SDCI. The UFC weighed in on Design Review Board guidelines a couple of years ago.

The program was created in 1994 to encourage better design and site planning that enhances the character of the city and ensure that new development fits sensitively into neighborhoods; provide flexibility in the application of development standards; and improve communication and participation among developers, neighbors, and the city early in the design and siting of new development.

The program has seven boards with 5 members each:

1. Community
2. Design
3. Development
4. Residential
5. Business
6. All board members are volunteers and are appointed by the Mayor and Council for a two-year term that can be extended by two years.

There are seven boards: Northwest, Northeast, West, Southeast, Southwest, Downtown, and East

UFC question/comment: Are the boards aligned with Council districts?

Answer: They are not. The Design Review Board has been around longer and they didn't want to politicize the process.

Design guidelines are used:

- As code authority by the Design Review Board (DRB)
- By DRB and City staff to judge the merits of proposed projects
- To inform the development of 18 sets of supplemental guidelines known as the Neighborhood Design Guidelines
- Apply to private property and the intersection with the ROW

Seattle's Design Guidelines include Citywide (updated in 2014), Downtown, and Neighborhood specific. Design guidelines apply to private development. Public projects go to the Design Commission

Lisa walked the Commission through the different sections in the Citywide Design Guidelines that relate to Trees:

- Context and Site 1: Natural systems and site features – use natural systems and features of the site and its surroundings as a starting point for project design.
  - o D. Plants and Habitat – talk about on-site and off-site features including trees.
  - o E. Water. E2. Adding interest with project drainage which would include trees.
- Public life 1: connectivity – complement and contribute to the network of open spaces around the site and the connections among them.
  - o A. Network of open spaces. A2. Adding to public life
  - o B. Walkways and connections. B3 pedestrian amenities
  - o C. Outdoor uses and activities. C3. Year-round activity
- Design concept 3: Open Space Concept. Integrate open space design with the design of the building so that each complements the other.
  - o C. Design. C2 amenities and features; and C3. Support natural areas
  - o D. Trees Landscape & Hardscape materials

UFC question/comment: suggests considering notifying Councilmembers for projects within their districts.

The Commission is interested in weighing in on the proposal that is being considered by Council. There will be a Council briefing next week, on Tuesday and two committee hearings are scheduled in September.

Design Review thresholds are based on square footage and number of units.

Design review departures may be granted from Land Use Code standards or requirements, except for floor area ratio (FAR); Height; Parking; and others per code.

There are three types of Design Review:

1. Full design review – design review board input at public meeting, per the threshold table
2. Administrative design review – staff review (optional for projects under SEPA thresholds and for certain projects containing SEDU's)
3. Streamlined Administrative Design Review – staff review (required for two or more townhouses, developed in 2011 when the multifamily code was updated and began to distinguish between townhouse and row house housing typologies, and for certain projects containing Small Efficiency Dwelling Units (SEDUs))

All have notification and comment periods. The distinction is that full has public notice, comment, and meeting; administrative has public notice and comment; the streamlined takes public comment as a courtesy but it's not appealable.

Design review program is being updated - August 2017:

The Mayor made a proposal and it's being considered by City Council. Update overview:

- Project thresholds
  - o Simplify thresholds
  - o Raise thresholds/eliminate streamline DR
  - o Raise thresholds of project complexity
  - o Review for certain development in industrial areas
  - o Include more types of institutional uses
- Early community outreach
  - o Applicant must conduct community outreach before beginning design review
  - o In addition to existing public notice and public comment opportunities
  - o Purpose to improve dialogue between the applicant and communities and improve applicant's understanding of the local context
- Administrative review & hybrid process
  - o New 'hybrid' process – one stage of review by staff, the other by the boards. Used for smaller projects that are complex and larger projects that are not complex
  - o More administrative process where both stages of review done by SDCI staff
  - o Use for smaller projects that are not complex
  - o Default process for affordable housing
- Other changes
  - o Exceptional trees – clarify and update the option of going through design review as a way to remove an 'exceptional' tree in low rise, midrise, or commercial zones.

Currently, if a developer wants to take out an exceptional tree they make them go through streamlined administrative design review. That's an issue that needs to be resolved through the code not design review. 28% are townhouses that go through streamlined DR.

In terms of public outreach changes, they are proposing to require all applicants to do community outreach before they come in the door for Design Review Process. Work with Departments of Neighborhoods to do this.

Outreach would be in person (community meetings), digital (website, with comments function, blog) and paper (door hanger, newsletter, notice, flyer, etc.).

### **Duwamish Tree Canopy Enhancement Project**

Andrew Schiffer is a resident of Georgetown and works on green infrastructure projects.

He talked about the concept of environmental justice and some of the projects he's been working on such as the Duwamish Tree Canopy Enhancement Project.

He wanted to share with the Commission the concept of environmental justice and the challenges the community faces in the Duwamish valley.

Environmental Justice (EJ) is about different factors and the cumulative effects of those factors. These factors include stress, crime, housing, transportation, sustainable economy, natural world, contamination, food, individual factors, health care access, activities.

The Duwamish river is a superfund site since 2001. The EPA gave funds to the Duwamish River Cleanup Coalition to study the Duwamish valley and produce data to show the impacts be pollution and industry in this area. They applied community based participatory research to the area and produced the Seattle Cumulative Health Impact Analysis Results (CHIA). The CHIA document produced a series of maps that show very interesting data.

They took this information to the community and asked what the most important issues were. Air pollution was the biggest issue (they have a large problem with youth asthma incidence); followed by soil contamination and water/river pollution.

They asked the community what action they would like to take. The community said tree planting, green walls, and advocacy for point source solution. New condos being built are taking down trees and don't have greenery (the community plants a lot to mitigate air pollution).

#### Duwamish Tree Canopy Enhancement Project

- Provides free trees to residents in the Duwamish Valley
  - o South Park
  - o Georgetown
  - o South Beacon hill
  - o Delridge
  - o Highland Park
- Giveaway events take place from October through March
- Multilingual staff
- Multiple types of trees available
- Planting help and follow-up provided
- Program run by DIRT Corps
- Partnership with Duwamish Valley Youth Corps
- Funded by Seattle Parks Foundation

UFC question/comment: is anything being done to support tree establishment in this very hot summers?  
Answer: they give out free watering bags and send out reminders to water the trees.

#### Growing the trees:

- Get trees from:
  - o KCD bare root plant sales
  - o WA and OR nurseries
- Depot at City Soil Farm on King County Wastewater Treatment plant in Renton
- Trees potted in GroCo soil mix
- Watered with reclaimed water
- High survival rate – around 85%

- Rapid growth
- DIRT Corps staff maintain the trees

Types of trees offered: Have a variety of trees including:

- Fruit trees
- Conifers
- Deciduous trees
- Native shrubs

Events in neighborhoods

- Two events per neighborhood Oct-March
- Saturdays, usually 10:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m.
- Advertise beforehand
- Partner with local groups like SPL and ECOSS
- DIRT brings – 80 trees to each event
- Residents pick their own trees
- Multi-lingual staff
- Planting and delivery help offered during event

Support at events

- Binders with facts for trees
- Staff available to discuss right tree/right place
- Planting and delivery support available
- Planting instructions handout
- Watering instructions handout
- Resource list handout
- Watering bags provided
- Paperwork in multiple languages

Program results to date

- Local job training programs learn about trees and planting (DIRT Corps and DVYC)
- Planted 1,000 trees in the Duwamish Valley
- Increased tree education
- Made tree planting and care convenient and accessible
- Increased food security
- Increased tree canopy
- Looking to expand to other neighborhoods/cities

They have installed two green walls to combat air pollution.

Georgetown Green Wall

- 126' long x 13' tall 3-D panels
- 75 vines planted
- Green walls can go where trees can't
- Will act as giant air filter
- Community decided location
- Community had input on design
- Community helped plant vegetation
- Publicity helped community get funding for more projects.

**MHA tree requirements**

Brennon Staley and Vera Giampietro from the Office of Planning and Community Development (OPCD) wanted to talk to the UFC about Mandatory Housing Affordability implementation and tree-related elements. Seattle is experiencing a serious affordable housing challenge. People are paying more than half of their income for housing. Rents have gone up by 35% in the last year.

HALA made 65 recommendations to address the housing crisis. One of those things is Mandatory Housing Affordability.

They want to present three opportunities to update tree and landscaping requirements:

1. Tree requirements for Residential Small Lot zones: New tree requirements for residential small lot (RSL) zones. Looking at greatly expanding the use of residential small lots. Currently there are two blocks of RSL in the city (between Capitol Hill and the Central District). At the time, tree requirements were not put in place. They looked at Single-family (SF) tree requirements first, and GreenFactor requirements. They are proposing a pilot that could potentially be applied to SF. It's a points-based system requiring one-point per 750 sqft of land area. People would get more points for larger trees and preserved trees. Will rely on tree list that the City already has. The goal is to have plantings result in an average canopy cover of 26%.

Brennon showed the illustration with proposed tree requirements for RSLs. It's meant to put trees on the ground. This is not for the life of the project the way GreenFactor is.

150 blocks are slated to become RSL. The proposal is for urban villages and urban centers.

UFC question/comment: it looks like stacked flats cover less area. The tandem housing seems to encourage more impervious surface. But they still would need to comply with stormwater requirements.

Response: there are benefits to preserving houses because of character and people wanting to stay in the house and sell the back. There are no hardscape limits, which is an issue.

2. Street tree requirement for residential small lot zones. Already have it in other zones. Looking at just applying the same to RSL. It would be a consultation with SDOT with ROWIM and Street tree manual.
3. Updates to GreenFactor (GF) requirements. The last time they updated the worksheet was in 2010. They are proposing an improvement to GF. They've had a lot of feedback from the community. A lot of concern about trees and vegetation and the character of the neighborhoods as more development comes in. Vera walked the Commission through the proposed changes to the list, which included increasing the points for tree preservation as well as get more value for large shrubs and trees.

GF applies in commercial and multi-family zones. This would not apply to SF or RSL.

**Public comment**

None

**New Business**

None

**Adjourn**

**Public input:** None