

# Green Factor Director's Rule *Update*

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Urban Forestry Commission  
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# Timeline

- July 2020 – Revised Green Factor Director’s Rule published for comment
- March 2019 – MHA legislation passed at Council
- May 2018 – briefed UFC on upcoming updates to Director’s Rule
- September 2017 – briefed UFC
- November 2017 – MHA legislation forwarded to Council
  - Score sheet
  - Seattle Municipal Code update

# Agenda

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What is Green Factor?

What materials guide designers?

Why did we update Green Factor?

What changes did we propose?

What changes did UFC recommend and which were incorporated?

Next steps

## Green Factor: *What is it?*

- The City's landscaping requirement for new development
- First adopted in 2006, SMC updated in 2010 to include more zones
- Director's Rule last updated in 2015

# Green Factor: *What is it?*

- Stated benefits:
  - Improves the look and feel of a neighborhood
  - Reduces stormwater runoff
  - Cools cities during heat waves
  - Provides habitat for birds and beneficial insects
  - Supports adjacent businesses
  - Decreases crime
- Qualifying landscape elements:
  - Trees
  - Shrubs and other low plantings
  - Groundcovers
  - Vegetated walls
  - Green roofs
  - Structural soils
  - *And more...*

# What materials guide designers?

- **Seattle Municipal Code**

- Chapter 23.45 Multi-family Zone development standards
- 23.86.019 Green Factor measurement

- **Scoresheet**

- Updates proposed through MHA in 2017, adopted in 2019

- **Worksheet**

- Minor edits proposed to coordinate with Scoresheet as part of DR update

- **Director's Rule**

- Updates proposed in July 2020 public comment draft

- **Tree & Plant lists**

- Updating lists on hold

# Why are we updating Green Factor?

- Mandatory Housing Affordability (MHA)
  - *See revised score sheet transmitted with MHA legislation in November 2017*
- Community feedback
- City- and designer-identified issues with the Director's Rule

# What are we trying to achieve?

- Improve aesthetic quality of landscape elements
- Improve survivability of landscape plantings (particularly trees)
- Mitigate experience of building height and bulk
- Transition to the pedestrian scale
- Improve landscape performance
- Increase overall health, wellbeing, and livability benefits associated with nature contact



# What changes are we considering?

- Clarify **irrigation** requirements
- Clarify **maintenance** requirement
- Clarify **soil** requirements **for trees**
- Update and clarify **vegetated wall** requirements, and limit applicable zones
- Indicate responsibility for **landscaping in the ROW**
- Align with **tree and plant lists** used elsewhere in the City (SPU, SDOT)
- Ensure **consistency** with Stormwater Code and Right of Way Improvements Manual
- Improve **user experience** for designers

**Thank you to the UFC for providing recommendations.**

# UFC Recommendations

## Tree Size

Recommendation	Incorporated?	Rationale
1. Align tree size categories to SDOT's classification	Not yet	Tree list update is on hold. Recommendation can be incorporated when that work resumes.
2. Create a new category for trees smaller than 15' in spread and for columnar trees	Not yet	Tree category changes included in the Scoresheet were transmitted to Council in 2017 and were not open for revision -- future changes could be made.
3. Create a uniform tree size classification across City departments	Not yet	Tree list update is on hold. Recommendation can be incorporated when that work resumes.

# UFC Recommendations

## Minimum Soil Volume

Recommendation	Incorporated?	Rationale
4. Use higher soil volume in accordance with James Urban's recommendations in <i>Up by Roots</i> , particularly in Rights of Way. Min 1000 cu ft for large trees.	No	There was substantial discussion about how to address soil volume within the project team. We chose to address it through the standard spec requirement for tree installation which is consistent with SDOT's practices for trees in the ROW. Larger soil volumes could unnecessarily jeopardize development projects. More research was required, and not within scope.
5. Close a loophole in the previous draft about soils over 48" in depth not contributing toward meeting soil volumes.	No	No longer relevant because soil volume calculations for trees planted in the ground are not required.

# UFC Recommendations

## Irrigation

Recommendation	Incorporated?	Rationale
6. Increase required irrigation from two years to five years for plant establishment. Applies for drought tolerant species as well.	Yes	During DR development City Arborists identified lack of water as a top reason why landscapes fail after installation. <i>See P. 4, F. Irrigation</i>
7. Current irrigation requirement conflicts with projects trying to achieve LEED status. Recommend LEED specialist be consulted for projects seeking LEED certification.	Not yet	Assumed the recommendation will be undertaken through the development process but is not something the City can require. SDCI is not aware of conflicts under current rule that already exceeds LEED threshold. Should they arise solutions can be further investigated.

# UFC Recommendations

## Structural Soil Systems

Recommendation	Incorporated?	Rationale
8. Structural soil systems must allow for a continuous feeder root zone between the system and the adjacent planting areas. Credit should factor in soil depth.	Yes	Continuous soil zone between soil systems and planting areas serves the intent of the credit, to provide soil volume for trees and maximize potential canopy spread. <i>See P. 15, F. Structural soil systems, subsection a.</i>
9. Provide more incentive for planting conifers.	Not yet	<p>Tree category changes included in the Scoresheet were transmitted to Council in 2017 and were not open for revision -- future changes could be made.</p> <p>The project team agrees that this is a significant change that should be made when appropriate.</p>

# UFC Recommendations

## Additional Recommendations

Recommendation	Incorporated?	Rationale
10. Change the perception of trees as short-term elements in the landscape.	To the extent possible	Added incentives for trees already included in 2017 MHA legislation emphasized trees substantially. Likely that a tree code or other enforcement mechanisms could further achieve this outcome.
11. Award highest tree preservation points to high-value trees, such as mature conifers and native trees. Preservation of smaller trees should have lower values.	Not yet	Tree category changes included in the Scoresheet were transmitted to Council in 2017 and were not open for revision -- future changes could be made.

# UFC Recommendations

## Additional Recommendations

Recommendation	Incorporated?	Rationale
12. Emphasis should be given to native tree species to maximize benefits to wildlife habitat	Yes	Native species are awarded bonus credit under Scoresheet credit G. 1. Tree list updates will also help achieve this.
13. Reduce multiplier for permeable pavement.	Not yet	Permeable pavement multipliers in the Scoresheet were transmitted to Council in 2017 and were not open for revision -- future changes could be made.



## Next steps.

- SDCI is taking public comment and incorporating relevant feedback.
- New Director's Rule published with final edits.

**Thank you.**