

# Urban Forestry Strategy/Role of Tree Code

Photo by John Skelton



Seattle Department of  
Construction & Inspections



Seattle  
Office of Sustainability  
& Environment

Urban Forestry Commission

December 1, 2021

# TODAY'S PRESENTATION

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- Citywide Urban Forestry Strategy
- Urban Forestry Commission Recommendations
- Resolution 31902
- Strategies Being Explored for Tree Code
- Next Steps

REMINDER:

# CITY'S URBAN FORESTRY STRATEGY

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## Partners/entities

- Public/Community
- Urban Forestry Commission (UFC)
- City
  - ✓ Departments – integrated UF functions, Trees for Seattle charter/structure
  - ✓ Mayor
  - ✓ City Council

## Guiding documents/plans/policies

- Urban Forestry Management Plan (UFMP) – 2007, 2013, 2020
- Seattle 2035: Comprehensive Plan
- Resolution 31902

## Urban Forestry work

- Tree protection – ordinance and department policies
- Tree maintenance/establishment
- Community engagement/education

REMINDER:

# UFC RECOMMENDATIONS

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## Director's Rule and other tree protection recommendations

- One-pager recommendations 2019
- August and September 2020
- March and April 2021

## Recommendations

- Removals during development – mitigation; replace significant trees
- Exceptional tree updates – definition (including groves), protections
- Tree assessments and tracking
- Expand permit program
- Tree care provider acknowledgment
- Fund and enforce tree protection

REMINDER:

# RESOLUTION 31902

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Council requested SDCI and OSE to explore the following strategies:

## Strategies

Expand exceptional tree definition and retain protections

Create significant tree removal permit

Require replacement for significant tree removal

Simplify tree planting/replacement requirements

Maintain tree removal limits in single-family zones

Explore in-lieu fee option for tree replacement

Track tree removal and replacement

Provide adequate funding to administer/enforce



# 1 of 5 Strategies Being Explored

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## TREE SERVICE PROVIDER REGISTRATION AND SERVICE PROVIDER AND HOMEOWNER SELF-REPORTING

- **Tree service provider registration could include:**
  - ✓ Certified arborists, TRAQ qualified
  - ✓ Acknowledgement Affidavit
  - ✓ Posting/Reporting
- **Homeowner self-reporting**
  - ✓ Could be online entry site plan submittal with SDCI-provided GIS tool into Tree Tracking System



# 2 of 5 Strategies Being Explored

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## EXPAND DEFINITION OF AN EXCEPTIONAL TREE BY LOWERING THRESHOLD FROM 30" TO 24" DSH, ADD TREES GROVES, HERITAGE TREES

- Goal to regulate more large, mature trees,
- Remove invasive species from City's list
- Strengthening tree grove protections and including heritage trees



# 3 of 5 Strategies Being Explored

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## DEFINE “SIGNIFICANT TREE” AS ANY TREE THAT HAS A DSH OF SIX INCHES OR GREATER AND IS NOT DEFINED AS AN EXCEPTIONAL TREE

- Currently no definition, some protections from removal, and no replacement requirements.
- Exploring regulating at 6 inches or greater (either with or without development)
- Adding new criteria to prioritize trees with greatest ecological functions



# 4 of 5 Strategies Being Explored

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## ALLOW FOR PAYMENT IN-LIEU WHEN TREE REPLACEMENT IS REQUIRED

- Could allow flexibility when there is not enough space on site to plant trees, even in adjacent planting strip (ROW)
- Payment amounts could be based on national standard tree functional replacement manual
- Would support other City programs to plant trees
- Could focus replanting in areas with existing low canopy cover



# 5 of 5 Strategies Being Explored

## SIMPLIFY PROCESSES AND UPDATE ENFORCEMENT PROVISIONS FOR TREE REGULATIONS

- Improve customer service
- Stronger tree regulations and enforcement will increase canopy over time
- Further increase penalties for illegal tree removals and retain criminal charges
- Improve/increase data collected
  - Tree service provider registration
  - Hazard tree documentation before removal
  - More trees protected, tracked
  - Allows staff to monitor canopy coverage and supports data-driven decisions



# NEXT STEPS –

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## December

- Developing draft recommendations
- Goal to make draft proposal available with Environmental (SEPA) review for public comment

## Q1 2022

- Work with stakeholders, including UFC, on any potential updates to the proposal
- Develop final recommendations for legislation

## Ongoing

- Identify potential implementation and enforcement needs



# Thank you!

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