



**SEATTLE URBAN FORESTRY COMMISSION**

- Julia Michalak** (Position #1 – Wildlife Biologist), Co-chair
- Joshua Morris** (Position #7 – NGO), Co-Chair
- Joe Sisneros** (Position #2 – Urban Ecologist - ISA) • **Falisha Kurji** (Position #3 – Natural Resource Agency)
- Becca Neumann** (Position #4 – Hydrologist) • **Stuart Niven** (Position #5 – Arborist – ISA)
- Hao Liang** (Position #6 – Landscape Architect – ISA) • **David Moehring** (Position # 8 – Development)
- Blake Voorhees** (Position # 9 – Realtor) • **Laura Keil** (Position #10 – Get Engaged)
- Jessica Hernandez** (Position #11 – Environmental Justice) • **Jessica Jones** (Position # 12 – Public Health)
- Lia Hall** (Position #13 – Community/Neighborhood)

*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*

**Draft meeting notes**

July 20, 2022, 3:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.  
Via Webex call and in-person at the  
Seattle Municipal Tower, Room 1872 (18<sup>th</sup> floor)  
700 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue, Seattle

(206) 207-1700

Meeting number: 2483 184 8047

Meeting password: 1234

**Attending**

Commissioners

- Josh Morris – Co-Chair
- Becca Neumann
- Stuart Niven
- Hao Liang
- Blake Voorhees
- Laura Keil
- Jessica Jones
- Lia Hall

Staff

- Patti Bakker – OSE

Guests

- Toby Thaler

Public

- Jesus Torres
- Sandy Shettler
- Steve Zemke
- Sharon London
- Satpreet Kahlon

Absent- Excused

- Julia Michalak – Co-Chair
- Joe Sisneros
- Falisha Kurji
- David Moehring
- Jessica Hernandez

**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:** Josh called the meeting to order and offered a land acknowledgement.

**Public comment:**

Jesus Torres wanted to share a situation they've been dealing with over several years, in trying to protect an exceptional tree. SDCI has failed to uphold policies around tree protections, pointing out how they may not be the best agency to manage tree protections. A new development project was proposed next door where there were at least three exceptional trees on site. It seemed like adequate protections were put in place, but when construction started, the developer did not protect the trees with adequate protection zones. Roots were damaged and covered over, and several other violations occurred. Neighbors submitted complaints to SDCI and the project was stalled at intervals, but it was still allowed to proceed. This experience indicates that the tree protections are lip service and developers are allowed to use loopholes to do what they want.

Sandy Shettler asked whether the UFC would consider reaching out to SDOT about their current projects involving street tree removals. Almost all of the only street trees on Aurora, from 80<sup>th</sup> up to 103<sup>rd</sup>, are going to be removed for sidewalks. They are healthy trees and this is one of the biggest heat islands in north Seattle, there are no other trees around. SDOT said they weren't properly planted and need to be removed to replace the sidewalks. This area is coping with climate change impacts and needs these healthy trees. pro

Steve Zemke provided some updates: 1) City Council yesterday passed a resolution to add climate resiliency and climate change into the Comp Plan, in particular to enhance tree canopy to reduce airborne pollutants, reduce stormwater runoff and mitigate urban heat island effects especially in areas of low canopy; 2) the appeal to the SEPA determination has completed all of the documents being filed; the briefs filed from the three parties are available online; 3) provided additional comments on the UFC's draft recommendations, including: PIL costs should be based on both tree size and ecosystem services, and tree replacement and maintenance fund should be set up to accept fines, grants and donations to purchase lands, set up covenants and for education. This is supported by Dan Strauss.

Sharon London said that she lives in the Maple Leaf neighborhood a 14-minute walk from the Northgate light rail station, and she's concerned about the health of trees near her home. She works with the Forest Stewardship Council and used to be Executive Director of Seattle Urban Nature. She's trying to avoid a situation like Jesus described earlier and sent a letter to Director Torgelson at SDCI. There are two exceptional trees on the property behind her, which are adjacent to exceptional trees on her property, which together make a grove. She wants to make sure they maximize the retention of trees in the development and also that the roots of her and her neighbors aren't harmed during the project. The trees in this neighborhood form an important greenbelt. She encouraged the UFC to encourage SDCI to follow the rules with this project.

Satpreet Kahlon is a representative of Yehaw Indigenous Creatives Collective. They are looking for a space to run sovereign programming and identified a series of parcels near Kubota Garden that Mapes Creek runs through. An environmental report identified over 500 trees there. They wanted to purchase a parcel there, but it ended up going to a developer who is running feasibility and filing for permits for luxury housing. They are looking for sources of advocacy and support so that their collective can purchase the parcel for long-term community benefit, especially given how quickly this area is being gentrified and losing canopy coverage. As permits are being refiled, they are looking for support to pause the development so the land can be returned to community for equitable public use.

Tessa stated that she is an artist who joined with several others to co-buy their home. They have been trying to get a permit to remove a hazard tree. They have found the cost for doing this is prohibitive for many homeowners, between the cost of the permit and hiring an arborist it's over \$1,000.

### **Chair, Committees, and Coordinator report:**

Patti provided some information on the urban forest-related conferences coming to Seattle in November. There are several conferences and meetings overlapping in the same week November 14-18:

- Partners in Community Forestry Conference will be Wednesday through Friday that week and is the larger conference – Nov. 16-18.
- That will be preceded on Monday and Tuesday by the Society of Municipal Arborists conference, and the associated Alliance for Community Trees Meeting. These are associated with the Arbor Day Foundation, which is what Seattle's Tree City designation comes from. This is a good chance to have these folks in town and be able to showcase Seattle's urban forest. As the host city, we have some city staff working with the conference planners on welcome sessions and field trips.
- Also happening on Monday and Tuesday that week is the Forests in Cities Network annual meeting being hosted here in Seattle. This network was founded in 2019 by the Natural Areas Conservancy in New York and now convenes folks from cities across the U.S. to collaborate on natural areas management. That meeting isn't necessarily open to the public for broad attendance, but it does increase the focus on natural areas and urban forest management in the city during that week.

More information will be coming out about the conferences, including registration and schedules; Patti put links to the organizations' websites in the chat so that folks interested can check them out and have that information for when registration does go live.

Josh reported on a few items:

- He is working to get some meetings set up with OSE Director Jessyn Farrell to collaborate on the Chief Arborist Statement of Legislative Intent, and asked for Commissioners who are interested in joining those to let him and Patti know.
- There is a meeting scheduled July 29<sup>th</sup> with Chanda Emery in SDCI to talk about the UFC recommendations on the draft protection ordinance; other Commissioners are likewise invited to join that if interested.
- Emerald ash borer has been detected in Oregon. Seattle has more than 4,000 street trees that are ash trees, so this is a concern and the Commission might think about how they might want to respond, potentially with some policy recommendations.
- Co-Chair Julia has taken another position that will require more of her time and she will not be able to continue on the Commission. That will leave a leadership gap, so Josh urged Commissioners to consider nominating themselves or others for a Co-Chair or Vice-Chair role. Josh noted the advantages and the duties of the role. Patti recapped the election process for last year, where there were no Commissioners able to take on the Chair role alone, so three Co-Chairs were elected. The third Co-Chair needed to leave the Commission shortly thereafter, leaving Josh and Julia to serve in the leadership roles. Now with Julia needing to leave, Josh is left with more responsibility than originally considered to take on, and the Commission really needs additional Commissioner(s) to step in to assist.

### **Solutions for density and trees**

Blake introduced Michael Eliason from Larch Labs, who are experts in designing high-density and climate-resilient buildings with an eye to the protection and enhancement of urban trees. They were invited to present to the UFC because their work dovetails with addressing the UFC's recognition that potential conflicts exist between achieving tree protection and other city goals like developing affordable housing, which the UFC believes can be accomplished with careful planning.

Michael has worked for many years in both Seattle and Germany. He outlined development patterns in Seattle and compared them to other cities in the world. Multi-family housing was legal on every parcel 100 years ago, similar to other cities. The city adopted the zoning ordinance in 1923, most of the city was

designated single family and most of the trees were cut down. This facilitated sprawl and exacerbated climate impacts. There are ways to develop cities that are more compact. It is not possible in many areas of Seattle to get to natural areas without a car; livability and walkability are not supported with our current development patterns.

The orientation and size of our buildings could also be more smartly designed. Since we have very little mid-rise and mostly low-rise, that contributes to the sprawl we see. We have also lost very large opportunities around light rail stations, where climate adapted neighborhoods and affordable housing could be developed in a diversity of building forms along with open space and trees.

Where we put trees matters. Streets are always the hottest parts of cities, so focusing trees there provides great benefits – quiet, wildlife, calmer, cars slow down. Another thing Seattle doesn't do as much as other cities is prioritizing sustainable mobility; we are a car-focused city. Some cities are incorporating green streets, which have no car traffic, they have trams and trees, and courtyards with trees behind the buildings. So the buildings are surrounded by trees.

Michael showed some examples of how to adapt development to be more climate friendly. Elements of these include incorporating parks in the neighborhood blocks as well as day care so that people don't have to drive to them, thin buildings around the edges of blocks, with green courtyards inside. Buildings are small but tall in order to allow more green space. Cities in other countries are more willing to adapt brownfields into ecofriendly greenfields.

Ecodistricts are park-oriented development, as an alternative to transit-oriented development. There are some such developments underway in Singapore, China and Europe; they can be very elegant places to live with high quality of life and diversity of housing. They incorporate variable-height buildings, diversity of public and private buildings, green spaces. The variable buildings offers a wide variety of housing options. Many of the developments focus on low-carbon living, and these ecodistricts can be carbon sinks.

Seattle hasn't opened up the development pattern options yet that allow for that mix of social and economic diversity within blocks. New typologies are recommended to rethink urbanism, combining the city model and the village model into a new typology.

Alternative housing types are also a good avenue for diversity and advanced development patterns. Michael described baugruppen, as self-developed urban housing projects. These can serve a wide variety of housing needs, and also provide a wide variety of amenities. Flexibility in design is an important element of this concept; buildings can be tailored to the need by switching out components as necessary.

Other examples of innovative development options:

- Self-managed and self-developed student housing can be structured so that it is tailored specifically for the needs of the project, with some shared spaces and rooms sized as needed.
- Ausbauhaus is a very simple shell that can be tailored to the level of quality the family can afford inside it. So this also allows for a range of social diversity.
- 7-story ADUs are being built in Paris, unlocking innovative housing options.
- Vertical additions to existing buildings – adding lightweight wood additional space on top of buildings. Vienna determined they can add 50,000 homes doing this, and Germany can add two million homes.

Questions from Commissioners included:

- Whether Michael is involved in advocacy and if so, what does he prioritize? He used to be more involved in advocacy, but since starting Larch Labs, has been working with other cities because

Seattle isn't going in this direction right now. Talking about these things helps to spread the ideas and get others interested.

- Are there studies showing how those tall thin buildings can supply the needed housing, as opposed to how Seattle has been building large, square buildings. Building codes and land use codes in the U.S. are not really conducive to these buildings.
- What are the opportunities for adaptation given that Seattle is already built out? What are the incentives that make it work for associated services in the mixed-use model? A lot of the districts are associated with transit and the services are incorporated into it. The U.S. is not as good at co-locating a lot of services. Adaptation is one of the biggest issues in planning in the U.S. Finding ways to incorporate new housing and open up neighborhoods is key.
- Has Michael noticed changes in managing streets during the pandemic and might those changes last beyond the pandemic? Some of the Stay Healthy streets may stay around for a while. Some of them were really successful. Around the larger arterials, it's harder to be successful with this, but in some of the smaller neighborhood streets, there is good potential.
- Regarding some of the examples incorporating multi-generational living, that is similar to what Seattle was seeming to do with pod living; how will that work in the age of the pandemic. Ventilation is key here, and can be maximized in design to make that work.

Blake will draft a follow-up letter to Michael.

### **Urban Forest Protection SEPA Draft Ordinance**

Josh was not present at the last meeting, so added some comments and questions into the current draft of the recommendations. Commissioners reviewed Josh's edits on the recommendations and worked through additional edits.

**Action: a motion to adopt the recommendations on the SEPA draft ordinance as amended was made, seconded and approved.**

### **Community engagement**

Commissioners reviewed the draft statements aimed at outlining the UFC's work around community development, as originally discussed a couple of months ago and with edits made by David recently. These draft statements build on the conversations the Commission has been having on this and synthesize feedback to provide direction for community engagement work.

Commissioners discussed and made additional edits to the statements. Defining "community" is a key area for discussion and understanding while outlining this work.

**Action: a motion to adopt the community engagement statements as amended was made, seconded and approved.**

### **Website review and potential updates**

Josh shared some slides outlining some thoughts for updating the UFC's website. This is a lot of people's first impression of the UFC, so it is worth reviewing how the experience is for folks using it. Josh reviewed the current pages on the website, to inventory what there is to work with. On the home page, the "above the fold" area currently doesn't have much information. Josh shared some possible ways to improve the page, with more dynamic and interactive options. Josh called for volunteers to work on developing website updates. Hao and Laura would like to participate. Patti will also participate and work to reconcile desired updates with some of the restrictions inherent in the city's webpage templates.

**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>**

**Public comment:**

Steve Zemke thanked the UFC for the work on what should be in an updated ordinance. SDCI's ordinance is a draft and most of what was discussed is within parameters of the DNS. It would benefit the UFC to look at the One Seattle Plan website; the comment period was extended into August beyond the next two meetings to look at the five alternatives. He encourages the UFC to urge them to put some of the innovative things discussed today into the Comp Plan and not just stick to the usual housing options, and considering changes in zoning and planning. In terms of the city budget, the UFC should keep in mind to encourage the city to at least create an urban forestry position in addition to OSE's current position.

**Adjourn:** The meeting was adjourned at 4:59 PM.

**Meeting Chat:**

from Lia Hall to everyone: 3:04 PM

having trouble hearing

from Tessa to everyone: 3:05 PM

I'd like to comment but am not seeing where to raise a hand, sorry!

from Bakker, Patricia to everyone: 3:21 PM

Please send any follow-up info to me at: [patricia.bakker@seattle.gov](mailto:patricia.bakker@seattle.gov)

from Bakker, Patricia to everyone: 3:24 PM

Conferences: <https://www.arborday.org/programs/pcf/>

<https://naturalareasnyc.org/national>

from Steve Zemke to everyone: 3:32 PM

recommended change -A robust payment -in-lieu program that adequately prices based both on tree size and on their ecosystem services ...

from Stuart Niven to everyone: 3:57 PM

Stepping away from my computer for a short while to look at a branch failure nearby so will stay signed in here but will be on my phone while I travel to and from.

from Laura Loe she/her to everyone: 3:58 PM

meanwhile in Seattle our future light rails are next to several golf courses and freeways, preventing these kinds of day dreams.

from Joshua Morris to everyone: 4:06 PM

<https://www.larchlab.com/>

from Blake Voorhees to everyone: 4:07 PM

thank you joshua and micheal!

from Lia Hall (privately): 4:07 PM

Hi Patti, I have to go take a pcr test before they close. Have a fever now and not feeling great. I'll watch the recording of the rest later. Thank you!

from Steve Zemke to everyone: 4:15 PM

Dedicated tree replacement and Maintenance fund. SDCI draft has funds going into SDCI budget, not dedicated. Fines currently go into city budget. Allow Tree Replacement and Maintenance Fund to not just accept in lieu fees, but accept donations, grants, purchase land, set up covenants, accept fines and use for educational purposes. Portland has this type of Fund.

from Steve Zemke to everyone: 4:20 PM

Portland's Fund is a Tree Planting and Preservation Fund - recommend that name. They have a separate fund for fines. Tree <https://www.portland.gov/code/11/15>

from Steve Zemke to everyone: 4:23 PM

Recommend Tree Planting and Preservation Fund which is more expansive based on type of funds going into it.

from Steve Zemke to everyone: 4:25 PM

Atlanta, GA Lake Forest Park, Tacoma DOT already use Accela system for tree permits

from Blake Voorhees to everyone: 4:33 PM

perfect joshua

from Blake Voorhees to everyone: 4:34 PM

"Seattle residents"?

from Steve Zemke to everyone: 4:34 PM

Polls need to be dealt with carefully as they can be gamed depending on who is reached and who responds..

from Blake Voorhees to everyone: 4:34 PM

versus "community"

from Blake Voorhees to everyone: 4:37 PM

"residents, workforce, and visitors"?

from Blake Voorhees to everyone: 4:38 PM

the key is how others will relate to this

from Blake Voorhees to everyone: 4:45 PM

suggested modification to 3) "to ...address fiscal constraints of tree protection..."

from Steve Zemke to everyone: 4:45 PM

SDOT had permit fees for removing and replacing street trees but eliminated them. Other cities charge less than \$400 for a permit. I think the \$400 permit fee and hiring an arborist ifs for removing an exceptional tree.

from Blake Voorhees to everyone: 4:45 PM

sorry 4)

from Blake Voorhees to everyone: 4:46 PM

which actually appears under 5) (I need stronger readers!)

from Hao Liang to everyone: 4:58 PM

<https://seattletransportationplan.infocommunity.org/>

from Hao Liang to everyone: 4:59 PM

The Transportation Plan is also open to public and it's good for us to look at

from Blake Voorhees to everyone: 5:00 PM

thank you joshua!

**Public input: (see next page and posted notes):**