



Seattle Urban Forestry Commission

2012 Annual Report

Introduction

In 2012 the Urban Forestry Commission continued to work on advising the Mayor and City Council on policies and regulations governing the protection, management, and conservation of trees and vegetation in the City of Seattle. Most of the recommendations issued by the Commission have the goal of encouraging City decision-making to recognize the urban forest as a critical piece of our urban infrastructure.

The Commission's primary objectives continue to be:

1. To help implement the Urban Forest Management Plan and achieve Seattle's 30% tree canopy cover goal;
2. To provide feedback and recommendations to City Council and the Mayor on specific policy actions that will ensure the long-term health and viability of Seattle's urban forest; and
3. To provide a forum for public dialogue to assist the Commission in its advisory role.

2012 Accomplishments

GSP funding

The Green Seattle Partnership (GSP) is one of the few ongoing programs in Seattle's natural areas that can restore our forested parklands to health.



With the GSP falling behind its targets due to reduced funding levels, the Commission issued two letters of recommendation urging the Mayor and City Council to find sustainable funding for the program.

Yesler Terrace Redevelopment Project Tree Preservation Plan

For 70 years, Yesler Terrace has provided quality housing for extremely low-income residents in Seattle. Aging buildings and infrastructure have become a challenge for the Seattle Housing Authority to maintain. Staff from the Department of Planning and Development (DPD) presented Yesler Terrace's tree preservation plan to the Commission in February.



One of the Tier 1 trees that will be preserved

The Commission issued a recommendation commending DPD's efforts to fully document the status of trees on the Yesler Terrace Redevelopment Project through the inventory and assessment efforts undertaken. Among other things, the Commission recommended including existing tree canopy cover levels for the site and a final tree canopy cover goal to make a connection between this project and the Urban Forest Management Plan goals.

The Yesler Terrace Redevelopment project was one of the Commission's first major project





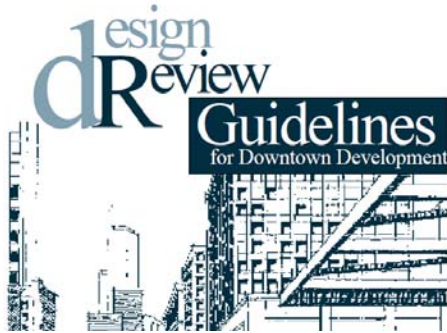
reviews, which helped shape the Commission’s approach to major projects.

Large project review guidelines

The Commission created project review guidelines to frame conversations and briefings with City departments. The Commission also created a large project questionnaire that provides the Commission with important details on the impacts projects or policies have on Seattle’s urban forest. Large projects reviewed in 2012 included the Seawall and Bell Street Park.

DPD Design Guidelines

Taking advantage of the current review of DPD’s Design Guidelines, the Commission issued a recommendation to make reference to the urban forest in general, and trees in particular, in different sections of the Design Guidelines to strengthen them and provide additional opportunities to increase Seattle’s canopy cover.



SDOT Street Tree Ordinance and Manual Standards and Specifications

The Seattle Department of Transportation (SDOT) presented their proposed update to the current Street Tree Ordinance (Ordinance #90047, last revised in February of 1961) to the Commission at the beginning of the year. The intent of the ordinance update is to provide greater protection to street trees, and to codify current practices and procedures.

The Commission issued a recommendation on both the Ordinance and the Manual. SDOT Urban Forestry responded pointing how the Commission’s input would be incorporated into the updated legislation. This Ordinance is moving forward to City Council in Q1 2013.

UFC involvement in 2012 Urban Forest Management Plan update

The Urban Forest Management Plan (UFMP) was created in 2007 to recommend tangible measures to preserve and expand Seattle’s urban forest. The UFMP’s overarching goal is to increase city tree canopy from 23 to 30 percent by 2037.



The Urban Forest Inter-departmental Team (IDT) in charge of the 2012 UFMP update worked closely with the Commission to get feedback throughout the update process. To provide input, the Commission issued a position paper.

Position paper on canopy cover goal for the industrial management unit for the 2012 UFMP update.

The 2009 canopy cover assessment suggested that canopy cover in industrial areas may be as little as 4% (as opposed to 8% found in earlier assessments used to inform the original UFMP in 2007).

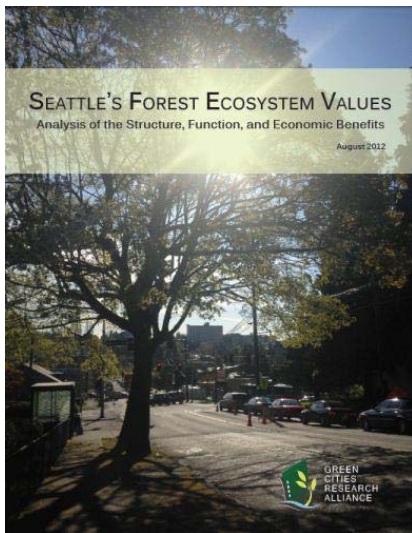




The IDT was considering the possibility of reducing the canopy cover goal for industrial areas from the original 10% goal. The Commission issued a position paper recommending the goal for industrial areas to remain unchanged believing that this is the right approach, and that industrial areas are important for meeting the overall 30% canopy cover goal for the city. The Commission also recommended establishing revised and more aggressive strategies for industrial zones in the updated plan's Action Agenda.

Seattle's Forest Ecosystems Values (i-Tree) report

Staff from the Green Cities Research Alliance presented the draft Seattle Forest Ecosystems Values report to the Commission in July seeking input.

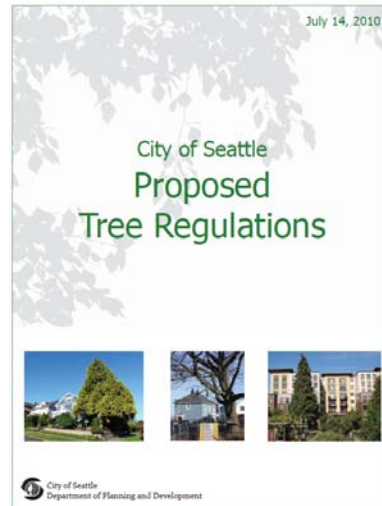


The Commission expressed its support for this type of study, which allows us to better understand Seattle's urban forest structure, function, and value, and to support management decisions that will improve human health and environmental quality, while helping Seattle reach its canopy cover goals.

The Commission also recommended periodic updates of both the i-Tree survey and canopy cover assessments.

DPD Proposed Tree Regulations

The Commission continued to follow and review DPD's progress on the proposal for new tree regulations in 2012.



DPD staff briefed the Commission on the new iteration of the proposed regulations for trees in private property. Once DPD presents the latest version of the document, the Commission will issue a recommendation.

Urban Forestry Commission/Urban Forest Inter-departmental Team joint meeting

Continuing the practice that got started in 2011, the Commission met with the IDT for an extended work session in 2012. The meeting goals were to continue to network and build rapport between the Commission and IDT members, and to work together on outreach and engagement efforts to solve urban forestry challenges.

Commission Membership

The Commission welcomed two new members in 2012. Leif Fixen was appointed in May to fill the Arborist role in Position #5. This was a City Council appointment with term extending through December 1, 2014 and renewable for three more years.

Erik Rundell was appointed in December to fill the Economist, Financial Analyst





role in Position #9. This was a Commission appointment to fill a vacant term expiring December 1, 2013 and is renewable for three more years.

Three Commissioners were re-appointed: Gordon Bradley (Council appointment for the University representative position #3), Matt Mega (Council appointment for the NGO representative position #7), and Jeff Reibman (Mayoral appointment for the Development community representative position #8).

Other work

Other projects and programs the Commission reviewed in 2012 included:

- Trees for Neighborhoods program report
- Urban Forest Management Plan 2011 progress report and 2012 work plan
- Green Seattle Partnership
- Parks briefing on policy on views
- Seattle City Light presentation
- Seattle Public Utilities 2013 projects

Conclusion

The Urban Forestry Commission celebrates the conclusion of its third year of existence with continued focus on improving and growing Seattle’s urban forest.

In 2012 the Commission focused considerable attention on DPD’s proposed new tree regulations for private property and the 2012 update of the Urban Forest Management Plan. Both of these documents will serve to guide future policy and management decisions as the City implements its vision of a healthy and diverse urban forest.

The Commission reviewed several policies and planning activities by City Departments, including the Yesler Terrace Development and Design Review Guidelines. The Commission also supported increased funding for the Green Seattle Partnership and continued to be

a conduit for the public to share their ideas and concerns related to the urban forest. The Commission and the IDT held their second annual retreat to build on our joint efforts and common goals.

As we move into 2013 we are excited to continue to build our partnerships and fulfill our role advising the Mayor and City Council.

Contact:

Additional information about the Urban Forestry Commission can be found at: www.seattle.gov/urbanforestrycommission, or by contacting:

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2012 Urban Forestry Commission

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 NGO Representative—Position #7

John Small, Vice-chair
 Urban Ecologist —Position #2

John Floberg
 Wildlife Biologist—Position #1

Gordon Bradley
 University Representative —Position #3

Peg Staeheli
 Hydrologist —Position #4

Leif Fixen
 Arborist —Position #5

Tom Early
 Landscape Architect—Position #6

Jeff Reibman
 Development Community —Position #8

Nancy Bird
 Planner —Position #9

