

SEATTLE URBAN FORESTRY COMMISSION

Tom Early, Chair • Steve Zemke, Vice-Chair
Weston Brinkley • Leif Fixen • Mariska Kecskes • Donna Kostka • Richard Martin • Joanna Nelson de Flores
Erik Rundell • 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

June 1, 2016

Meeting Notes

Seattle Municipal Tower, Room 2750 (27th floor)
700 5th Avenue, Seattle

Attending

Commissioners

Tom Early – chair
Steve Zemke – vice-chair
Weston Brinkley
Leif Fixen
Mariska Kecskes
Donna Kostka

Absent- Excused

Richard Martin
Joanna Nelson de Flores
Erik Rundell
Andrew Zellers

Staff

Deb Heiden - SPU
Sandra Pinto de Bader - OSE
Maureen Sheehan - DON

Guests

Mark Brands – SiteWorkshop (landscape architect representing Swedish)

Public

Steve Gillespie – Toll Brothers
Aaron Hollingbery - Toll Brothers
Brian Wulfasting (sp?) - Toll Brothers

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

Tom called the meeting to order and read the Commission’s mission. To accommodate public comment, Tom moved the agenda item on discussion of the request by Future Queen Anne for the Commission to send a representative to act as a witness on their appeal of the Toll Brother’s Seattle Children’s Home redevelopment SEPA determination.

Public comment

Steve Gillespie – Foster Pepper – representing Toll Brothers. This Commission is not set up for project level review. Advises Mayor and City Council but doesn’t review or approve projects. They were not aware that the Commission would be discussing their project today and they scrambled to come to the meeting to provide public comment. Toll Brothers representatives made themselves available to answer any questions the Commission might have.

Tom – The Commission had previously discussed the request by Future Queen Anne to participate as a witness in the group’s appeal of the SEPA determination of the Toll Brothers’ project. The Commission was inclined not to participate but Tom wanted to give members the opportunity to discuss.

Sandra mentioned that during her phone conversation with Jeremy Acker from Foster Pepper she clarified that the Commission would not be discussing the project itself but deciding whether or not to send a representative to act as a witness for the community group appealing the SEPA determination.

The Commission agreed that they felt they had already expressed their opinion and recommendation on this project through their letter of recommendation dated December, 3 2014 and will not be sending a representative to act as witness on this appeal.

ACTION – Sandra will formally respond to the request by Future Queen Anne.

UFC question/comment: the UFC is supporting the City’s goal to achieve 30% canopy cover. In order get there Seattle needs to protect existing trees and also replace removed trees. What’s your general perspective on that as a construction company?

Answer: They believe it should be a balanced approach. They are a for-profit company and need to produce projects that are profitable. They won’t be able to make a profit if they decide not to develop half of the property to save vegetation. They value existing, mature trees and try to make that a feature of their development projects. It depends on the situation that determines what they can and cannot do.

UFC question/comment: what do you think of a policy that might allow for tree removal and have projects contribute to a fund for tree replacement?

Answer: predictability is always valuable. They would be supportive of a policy that provides predictability and allows, for example, transferring canopy cover to other areas.

Adoption of May 4 and May 11 meeting notes

Moved to next week due to lack of quorum.

Swedish Hospital First Hill site improvements – Mark Brands

Mark Brands is the Landscape Architect in the team and will be briefing the Commission the Swedish First Hill site improvements. Mark acknowledged that there is a larger team that has been working with Swedish on this project. This presentation to the UFC would have been more timely when they were going to Design Commission. Nevertheless, they are happy to present to the Commission.

This project provides the community with a robust benefit package. They are doing some creative things that haven’t been done before in Seattle.

Alley vacation public benefits summary:

- First Hill mile
- First Hill Park funding
- Public Art along the Mile

- Minor Ave voluntary setback
- Boren Ave voluntary setback
- Columbia St. right-of-way (ROW) enhancements
- Cherry St. ROW enhancements
- Boren and Cherry pedestrian signal
- Minor and James pedestrian signal

Minor Ave skybridge public benefits:

- Minor Ave Garden
- Marion Ave Garden
- Minor Ave Garden public art
- Marion St garden public art
- Minor and Columbia pedestrian crossing improvements
- Minor Ave ROW enhancements

The project team engaged Tree Solutions early on to provide assessment of trees on the property. Examples of decisions made based on the assessment: They are saving two exceptional Horse Chestnuts and are taking away overhead power so that they can accommodate larger canopy trees. They have been coordinating/negotiating with Shane Dewald (SDOT) on the species selection. The project also has rain gardens.

Some of the project elements include:

- The NW tower has two frontages: Marion and Minor. They are preserving several trees based on health and survival likelihood.
- First Hill Mile – they are promoting walking in the neighborhood, doing pedestrian safety improvements, bulbs, signage, art and tree improvements. They are creating 8ft-wide planting strips with more space for root zones. They will do selective pruning on the mile section between University and Spring. They are in conversation with SDOT and Parks for the ROW and Park elements of the project.
- There are four blocks on Boylston. The Mile is on the East side of Boylston. There is a block with no street trees that has overhead power lines. Between Spring and Marion there are a couple of Plane trees that will be preserved. There are two surface parking lots that will likely be developed.
- On Broadway they are proposing to remove pavement to provide a contiguous planting strip and improve the root zone for existing trees. Wherever possible they are planting large canopy trees to keep the character of the neighborhood.
- They are going to be air spading certain areas and come back with appropriate filling, especially in areas with mature canopy that is constrained.

UFC question: are you removing parking on other areas of the project?

Answer: They are removing parking mostly on their own frontage as to not affect other people's frontage. They are affecting four blocks from James to Madison.

UFC question: the UFC has been looking at the MIMP process and will be providing general suggestions. It's helpful to hear this presentation.

Answer: the language in terms of tree canopy in the MIMP guidelines/code is not very strong. Trees and open space would be a good thing to tackle.

UFC question: can you speak about the process to develop the Mile as part of this project?

Answer: they have a public realm action plan (SDOT, Parks, SDCI and a community group). The idea came from this plan that promotes walking, exercise, and discovery. Swedish is setting great examples to influence development in the neighborhood. They are very fortunate to have a great community group to work with.

UFC question: Did you find working with the City difficult being that some of these things are so out of the box?

Answer: everybody has jumped on board to make the project good and create an example. The neighborhood allowed this to happen and gave the project the great idea. The most challenging thing was to get people together to work on and having a Project Number to unify efforts was very helpful .

UFC question: Can you provide specific number of trees being removed and planted?

Answer: The team will gather that information and send it to Sandra to distribute.

SPU budget briefing – Deb Heiden

The UF work in SPU is broken down between reLeaf and GSP and the management of trees on SPU lands. The total budget comes to \$1,108,000.

UFC question: is non-labor essentially contractors?

Answer: contractor and buying materials and plantings. They are trying to do some advanced planning to re-grow the forest through successional plantings and complying with the 2 for 1 tree replacement requirements.

UFC question: who do you direct to do the successional planting?

Answer: works with the landscape crew chief.

UFC question: does your budget include watering for Tree for Neighborhood trees?

Answer: no, the watering is the responsibility of the property owner that receives the trees. reLeaf sends watering reminders.

UFC question: In the past the Commission encouraged reLeaf to find a way to promote the program on bill inserts.

Answer: the reLeaf Program Manager has worked with SPU and provided tree content to be included on the bill inserts. For example, last summer, when SPU was recommending saving water, the bill insert mentioned that it was important to keep watering young trees using watering bags.

UFC question: What types of trees are being planted in the North transfer station?

Answer: The north transfer station is in the process of installing landscape. They are looking at the irrigation and drainage systems. The trees are mostly deciduous.

UFC question: there is concern about idling while waiting to go in.

Answer: the new design will alleviate idling.

UFC question: are all the water reservoirs lids done?

Answer: they are all done, except for the Greenlake property and Volunteer Park which are in a holding pattern. Regarding the Roosevelt reservoir the decision has been made that it will not be used as a reservoir in the future but they haven't decided what the future use of the property will be. Parks would like to have the 11 acres but they can't afford it. There are some great oaks along 75th street.

UFC question: how has the urban forestry budget in SPU been doing overtime?

Answer: for reLeaf it has increased. For GSP it has been steady and funding for management of trees is tough. It has been a struggle to keep it in place even though they are adding acres of land to manage every year.

UFC question: is the one crew for all SPU properties?

Answer: doesn't include watersheds. We have the smallest staff per acre in the city.

UFC question: have you figured out when is the average time when you can go back to a tree to maintain?

Answer: they maintain younger trees through establishment (three years). The rest get pruned between 10-20 years depending on the location.

UFC question: when community members want to prune trees on SPU property, who do they go to?

Answer: Deb reviews and approve and usually doesn't allow people to prune trees. They are in negotiation with Friends of Meadowbrook. They struggle with management of volunteer activities on the 14 acres at that location. SPU has a minimum presence and they often run into conflicts with the public due to the legacy of having allowed people to do pretty much whatever they wanted to in the past. They are working with GSP to train forest stewards and manage them through reLeaf.

UFC question: do you know what canopy cover you have in your 200 acres?

Answer: they don't have an updated inventory.

UFC question: Are you aware of any new thoughts within SPU regarding minimizing the footprint and tree impacts of SPU utility pipes and infrastructure.

Answer: she always tries to accommodate the largest appropriate tree. They have many challenges in First Hill, Downtown and Capitol Hill because the age of the mains, which are very fragile and break very easily. If they are not replacing the main there is not much they can do. If those mains were to fail it would be catastrophic.

UFC question: what would be the first thing you'd like to add to your program?

Answer: they are happy to have reLeaf in the department. It was just Deb and her group for decades. During her first 10 years in the utility, Deb was the only gardener for all the properties. She would love to have a certified arborist on staff with the appropriate equipment to manage and maintain SPU trees and that this would be their dedicated work load. When they try to get someone in with those credentials, they get to be a senior lead and get frustrated for not being able to do the work (hard to retain staff).

UFC question: who is in charge of what's going on with the open ditches in north Seattle? Is it SPU or SDOT?
Answer: it's Deb's group. Maintaining the ditches helps with water quality. They could also create culverts. The GSI structure is being installed in the upstream areas of watersheds. There is significant planting in Thornton Creek Watershed.

Next week Deb will take the UFC to West Seattle to share what's going on a couple of sites including a detention facility with a creek and detention pond.

MIMP letter of recommendation – continues and possible vote

Tom walked the UFC through the proposed revisions to the MIMP letter of recommendation.

ACTION: A motion to approve the revised letter of recommendation as written was made, seconded, and approved.

Get Engaged interview participation

The Commission agreed to have Tom and Sandra participate in the interview panel to choose the next Get Engaged member.

Toll's Seattle Children's Home redevelopment approved proposal

The Commission agreed that they have fulfilled their mandate to advise City Council and the Mayor when they issued the December 3, 2014 letter of recommendation. They agreed not to send a Commission representative to be a witness for the Future Queen Anne SEPA appeal.

Public comment

None

New Business:

Tom went to a tree walk in the Central District. He was very impressed with the lead (a retired political science professor) who spoke about the significance of trees from a non-biological perspective. There is a lot of value to going to a 'curated' tree walk.

Steve's neighbor wants to remove a conifer so he doesn't have to deal with needles on his roof. The pruning would leave it very unbalanced. Are there guidelines?

Tom mentioned that the ISA says not to remove more than 25% of the tree. But the proposed trimming will not solve the needle problem. Trees have leaves and needles.

Adjourn

From: Amanda Shellenberger [<mailto:ashellenberger@anchoragea.com>]

Sent: Wednesday, May 25, 2016 9:58 PM

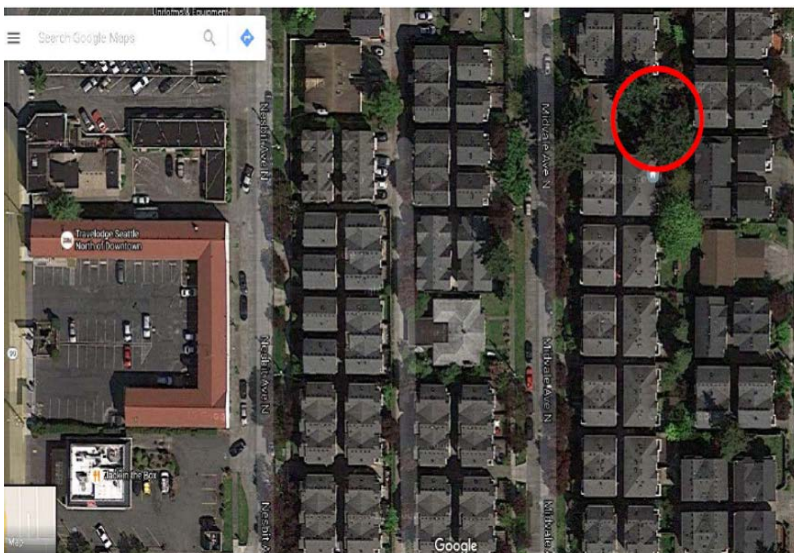
To: PRC

Cc: Pinto de Bader, Sandra; Juarez, Debora

Subject: Project 3022961 - Removal of Significant and Exceptional Trees

To Whom it May Concern –

Thank you for soliciting comments on this project. I am the homeowner of 8524B which is one of the townhomes immediately south of the (8532) lot. I am concerned that the proposed development will inadequately preserve the existing mature trees that provide tremendous value in ecological services (not to mention irreplaceable beauty) to the neighborhood. The proposed removal of so many significant and exceptional trees will irreparably harm the character of the neighborhood and should be avoided and minimized. One of the things that attracted to me this neighborhood is the care in which other lots have been developed while leaving established significant and exceptional trees in place. Removal of so many trees is in direct conflict with Urban Village Policy (UV51) which, "Promote[s] sustainable management of public and private open spaces and landscaping including preserving or planting native and naturalized vegetation as appropriate to the landscape..." The tree canopy provides much needed shade and shelter for wildlife, privacy in a neighborhood that has been asked to bear a greater burden of density than others, and a hospitable microclimate in the heat island associated with the SR-99 Aurora transportation and commercial corridor. While I understand that preservation of all the existing vegetation on the site may not be practicable, I feel that there is a statutory and policy driven imperative to preserve the established tree canopy as well as the privacy of existing neighbors. I have a large picture window facing north and overlooking the 8532 lot. Currently one of the significant trees is immediately outside my window which creates a good buffer between me and my neighbor. There is also very large tree in the rear of the lot that makes up large portion of the tree canopy on the block. I believe that these trees should be preserved. (Please see figure below from Google maps showing tree canopy of referenced trees circled in red.) Any replacement trees that can be planted will take decades to reach maturity if they survive. The city's record of enforcing tree removals outside of development is atrocious. The use of replacement trees as mitigation for the removal of existing trees is unlikely to result in the replacement of the shade, habitat and privacy functions that the existing trees provide. Thank you for your consideration of these concerns. Please feel free to email me or call me anytime with questions.



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ANCHOR QEA, LLC

From: Aubrey Weeks [mailto:aubreyw@siteworkshop.net]

Sent: Thursday, June 02, 2016 2:22 PM

To: Pinto de Bader, Sandra

Cc: Mark Brands; Liz Browning; Supp, Daria

Subject: SFH: Street Trees

Hi Sandra,

Mark mentioned that it would be helpful to have numbers on the total quantity of trees in the Right-of-Way to be removed and replaced for the Swedish First Hill project.

Block 95

Removed: 19

Replaced: 21

Northwest Tower

Removed: 6

Replaced: 11

First Hill Mile

Removed: 7

Replaced: 30

Note: For these numbers I am excluding the trees at First Hill Park. We have noted they are a candidate for replacement, but that work will be under the renovation of First Hill Park by Seattle Parks.

Total Removed: 32

Total Replaced: 62

Please let me know if you need anything further from the team.

Best,

Aubrey Weeks LEED Green Associate

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