

## **Suggestions for Tree Protection and Stewardship in Seattle**

- from Annie Thoe, Seattle Victory Heights and Pinehurst neighbors

**Trees represent the concept of Teamwork: community, peace, inclusion, protection, homes and habitat for all, survival and vitality.** Need to shift in perspective from land use to land stewardship. Sustaining and planting more trees is one clear way to improve conditions for cleaner air, cool the planet, ensure our resources for building supplies, and connect communities.

- **City issue an immediate moratorium to declare any lots with native Trees and Exceptional trees over six inches in diameter as “Environmentally Sensitive”** category in order to protect lots from being clear cut, to protect our exception trees from our present zoning laws. This will halt the pace of illegal development that threatens our air quality from diminished old growth tree canopy, storm water issues,
- **Moratorium: Outlaw logging/clear cuts in the city for development immediately until a stronger policy to protect critical areas is in place — see above point. We need to re-think this fast-track development without providing adequate infrastructure, community impact, environmental impact, transportation issues and long-term impacts of density** (Cambridge, MA- just issued a moratorium this year in response to public outcry. Look at Chicago’s projects and density nightmare) In our neighborhood alone, we **have two more critical wooded lots that could be logged again- one by this same developer: 11344 23rd Ave NE. and the other is 2203 22nd Ave. NE.** Until a moratorium can be placed, uphold strict enforcement of the current policy that all trees over 6” diameter: *“No more than three non-exceptional trees six inches in diameter or greater may be removed on a lot in any one-year period.”* - This current policy should be removed and is no longer working with our current situation and with global warming. 6-inch trees take 30 years to grow. We can’t afford or allow to lose any of these larger trees at this point.
- **Mandatory Review on development designs for minimum number of trees to be retained** e.g., at least three trees of significant diameter size (or what environmental consultants design) to ensure tree protection in residential neighborhoods, single family home zones least monitored in the city. Engage EPA and non-profit groups to help.
- **Storm water department can issue recommendations on properties in critical areas, declare areas critically environmentally sensitive** where mature trees need to be not only maintained, but what numbers of trees would be beneficial and **recommend planting trees to homeowners** who don’t currently have trees on their lots.
- **Neighborhoods or individual homeowners can petition zoning to declare their lot or areas of their neighborhood than contain large stands of native, exceptional and mature trees as “Environmentally sensitive”** to ensure we protect and foster old growth within the city for vitality for the future.
- **Easements once issued for a building permit currently cannot be withdrawn and need to be when permits threaten large trees.** Right now even with massive public complaints in this case with removing a perfectly healthy big tree, the developer has the right to remove a heritage tree if they’ve been granted easement. This needs to be changed to allow some public input and appeal.

### Suggestions for Tree Protection and Stewardship (pg. 2)

- **Arborists hired by developers make money to cut down trees and can be persuaded with the excuse that the tree is hazardous.** Any additional trees that developers want to cut have to have an **independent arborist selected by the city review any additional trees**. All trees must be marked before cutting and reviewed. **Neighbors should be notified as well** since any large tree removal greatly impacts the neighborhood and threatens health of their trees. The developer in this clear cut pressured a neighbor during the cutting process to cut a tree on the property line without getting a permit claiming it would die in two years anyway from the driveway they were constructing near it. There will always be some hazards with trees. But even worse hazards without trees— We need an **independent arborist** to review a building project without the developer present to intimidate the arborist. Make a fee for independent arborist review part of development application process.
- **Pruning versus Cutting.** Trees are disappearing faster than replaced. Pruning requires more expertise but gives arborists more work later and just as much or more money. Cutting, when unnecessary, stresses and can diminish or threaten the health of other trees. How do you replace trees that are 100 -130 feet tall quickly? this is a false claim that the canopy taken away can be replaced by a developer. This current development case would take over 100- 120 years.
- **We all pay for this! Short term and long term costs of tree removal need to be assessed by city prior** to permitting process of development. Costs to the consumer and city for waste management basement flooding, flooding and street damage from runoff, pollution to our streams from water runoff, drought and damage from lack of protection to neighboring plants, rising costs for higher temperatures and air conditioning, damage to neighboring trees, weakening trees. Costs of these developments are currently deferred to the neighbors and citizens. City Building Code Violations replied: “The developers have a right to make as much money as they can with their lots— but to whose expense?”
- **Larger signage in residential areas of project intentions.**The signage in this recent development was so small, practically hidden with no indication of clear-cutting. Signs should indicate when a large tree is going to be removed and reasoning so folks can be alerted. Removing these trees increases our temperature, reduced air quality, increase costs for cooling homes, kills other trees and native plants- not to mention wildlife that rely on shade, increase watering demands, basically depletes our infrastructure costs to the city and community well-being.
- **What avenues to stop developers who disobey the law? tree poachers?**  
Suspend or remove licensure, bigger fines. Retaining the tree itself probably pays much more than the fine. I called the Building Code Violations & Complaints for the City about this developer- Gamut360 who clear-cut this recent property and talked with the city employee Eddie Scott 206-233-7857 said this developer had all his permits approved to cut. He excused himself, saying he was new and checked with his supervisor who said “everything was fine.” How is this possible?
- **Awards for designs/projects that work with retaining trees** and their impact on the environment. Let’s have developers strive to do better with ecosystem design. Work with Universities to award better research and design for maximizing tree use, sustainability and green building that necessitates trees as part of the design and development.

### Suggestions for Tree Protection and Stewardship (pg. 3)

- **Steward policy for stewarding trees in every neighborhood - part of block watch, block parties.** Anytime sensitive habitat or trees over 6” are removed, developer or homeowner must replace the habitat removed or pay for city to replace it— again, that’s a big tree to replace. How do we replace these big trees that took 30, 50, 100 years to grow?
- **Neighborhood involvement with tree monitoring for health, measuring, tending (ivy removal or other maintenance) and mapping trees in neighborhood** to raise awareness, bird counts— can engage interest in stewardship through block parties. Ranking neighborhoods for most tall trees, best bird habitat, best bee and butterfly, best native plants, Frog habitat, owl/raptor/hawk habitat, best “green” houses, best vegetable gardens and rooftop/container gardens
- **School programs: adopt a tree in your neighborhood for the year**, study about this type of tree and compare with others, change through season, which birds live there, etc. - can pair up with neighbors or non-profit education groups for interest in our local trees and habitat.
- **University programs:** more emphasis on research with urban forestry with effects of health and livability, community building, combat global warming, business attraction, tourism, habitat. Tracking tree loss and replacement. Tracking positive gains in areas of more tree density.
- **Engaging more local non-profit communities from environmental groups, garden groups, churches, social clubs, sporting groups, boy scouts, girl scouts, outdoor activity groups** to assist in their own ways of retaining, stewarding trees - cheering each other on. Mapping trees helps expand awareness and community. NYC has a tree map for birders at Central Park that is now a tourist attracting tool but can also be attractive for gardeners, designers, etc.
- **Awards for Businesses** get involved with tree preservation, rooftop gardens, tree-planting possibly work with Social Venture Partners – Seattle (SVP) to come up with incentives to encourage businesses to develop more around supporting tree habitats, protecting existing trees and planting more trees <http://www.socialventurepartners.org/seattle/who-we-are/>
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- **Encourage neighbors to notify other neighbors out of courtesy when applying for tree removal or large specie tree planting**, and help city monitor tree cutting with a hotline or website with approved tree cutting address lists that people can look up. Even with trees in one’s yard, these trees provide shade, windbreak, soil and groundwater stability and cool the neighborhoods in heat. Tree planting also can affect shading/obstruction for other neighbors. Trees can affect neighbors as much as home development and fence-building.
- **School programs: adopt a tree in your neighborhood for the year**, study about this type of tree and compare with others, change through season, which birds live there, etc. - can pair up with neighbors or non-profit education groups for interest in our local trees and habitat.
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- **Awards for Businesses to implement tree preservation, home design and community building for innovative designs** to reduce footprint/home size/reduce building material use and design with consideration of habitat and environmental impact, community enhancement, tree-planting, local food production and rooftop gardens. Possibly work with Social Venture Partners – Seattle (SVP) to come up with incentives to encourage businesses to develop more innovation around supporting tree habitats, protecting existing trees and planting more trees <http://www.socialventurepartners.org/seattle/who-we-are/>
- **Utility cost analysis of large homes** without trees vs. small/modest homes for cost for heating, cooling, watering using resources. **Incentives to reduce energy and resource consumption by increasing cost of utilities for gas, water, electricity after these large homes exceed a base rate of sustainable use comparable a modest home.**
- **County offer a rebate on the "drainage fee" portion of our taxes for each large tree that is an incentive to care and maintain trees**, rather than charging for permits to remove trees. Reward those who have the trees, while they are providing the benefits.