Growing Seattle’s Urban Forest
2012 Comprehensive Planning and Regulatory Updates

Trees are viewed as an important infrastructure element within the City of Seattle due to their role in promoting social, economic, and environmental health. In particular, trees manage stormwater by capturing and slowing rain; filter air pollution; provide food and habitat; and contribute to the character and aesthetic beauty of our neighborhoods and business districts.

In order to maximize the benefits of trees within Seattle, the City has engaged in an effort led by the Urban Forest Interdepartmental Team to update city-wide policies and regulations. This work has resulted in an update of the Urban Forest Management Plan as well as key regulations as discussed below.

City staff will be hosting an Open House to speak with the community about current urban forest efforts. This event will take place in the Bertha Knight Landes room at City Hall (600 4th Avenue) on Wednesday, August 1, from 5:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. Presentations at 6:00 p.m.

Urban Forest Management Plan (UFMP):
The UFMP was created in 2007 to identify goals and strategies that will help Seattle maintain, preserve, restore, and enhance its urban forest, making Seattle a healthier, more beautiful place to live and work.

The UFMP is currently undergoing its first-five year update. This update does not change the original plan goals or the strategies to accomplish the 30% canopy cover goal. More data points and detailed planting potential analysis are needed before adjusting the goals and the City anticipates that this will be done in the next UFMP update.

Important elements of the Plan include:
- City-wide canopy cover goals and key indicators of progress
- Current data on the state of the urban forest including trees on public property, in parks, and along rights-of-way
- Action strategies for improving our knowledge, strengthening the City’s management practices, and supporting community stewardship of the urban forest
- Summary of existing urban forestry programs in the City

The UFMP is an effort of all City departments that impact trees, coordinated by the Office of Sustainability and Environment. The draft plan is available for public comment through October 1, 2012 at www.seattle.gov/trees/management.htm. Questions and comments should be sent to Sandra.Pinto_de_Bader@seattle.gov.

Street Tree Ordinance and Street Tree Manual Standards and Specifications:
The Seattle Department of Transportation (SDOT) Urban Forestry section is proposing an update to the current Street Tree Ordinance (last revised in 1961). This document was drafted with input from an advisory panel consisting of residents, commercial arborists, and City staff from several departments. The intent of the ordinance update is to provide greater protection to street trees and to codify current practices and procedures. SDOT will be submitting the legislation to Council this summer. The public comment period for SDOT’s Street Tree Ordinance has ended, but more information is available at www.seattle.gov/transportation/treeordinance.htm.
Private Property Tree Regulations Update:
The Department of Planning and Development (DPD) is undertaking a comprehensive update of the tree regulations governing private property. The intent of the update is to improve existing tree regulations in order to make them easier to understand, implement, and enforce, and to implement a number of new measures that would expand or improve development standards to better mitigate the impacts of development.

After receiving extensive public comment on a draft proposal in 2010, DPD has developed an updated proposal and draft legislation which is available for public comment through October 1, 2012. The draft update and legislation is available at [www.seattle.gov/dpd/Planning/trees](http://www.seattle.gov/dpd/Planning/trees). Questions and comments should be directed to Brennon.Staley@seattle.gov.

reLeaf Outreach and Incentive Programs:
The City’s reLeaf program implements strategies to engage residents in urban forest stewardship. The program provides information and support for residents to understand the value of trees and how to care for them; facilitates access to urban forest organizations and events throughout the city; and works closely with City departments and community organizations to make urban forest outreach efforts accessible, understandable, and coordinated in the eyes of the public.

The program maintains, develops, and delivers outreach tools and materials such as the reLeaf website ([www.seattle.gov/trees](http://www.seattle.gov/trees)), brochures, presentations, workshops, and trainings; engages Seattle residents in tree planting and stewardship; and leverages federal and state funds, along with thousands of volunteer hours through the Tree Ambassador, Urban Orchard Stewards, and Trees for Neighborhoods programs. City departments continue to work on achieving higher levels of coordination using reLeaf as their main outreach tool. For more information about reLeaf contact Jana.Dilley@seattle.gov.