

Seattle Urban Forest Management Workshop
Small Group Notes

Goals 1 & 2

1. How should the City balance tree maintenance needs with the need for additional information about our trees and enhanced management tools within limited budgets?

Theme: Prioritize needs

Group comments:

- Prioritizing needs will allow you to make funding decisions; having an inventory that allows you to understand resources needs allows you to prioritize – private companies can be involved if they have a good understanding of the scope of the issue
- We know where we don't have trees; don't focus on minutiae – don't spend \$ finding out more

Theme: Be proactive rather than reactive

Group comments:

- Parks crews have improved significantly in their ability to be proactive and not only reactive
- Proactive rather than reactive – at least a 50/50 balance

Theme: Focus on maintenance

Group comments:

- Money might be better at maintenance – UW could do research
- Maintain what you know you have – don't necessarily need inventory to know what you have if you're regularly working in the field
- Need synergy with crews that maintain trees – crews need to feel they're efficient before funding new information

Theme: Can't maintain appropriately without additional information

Group comments:

- Maintenance only works if you're proactive rather than reactive – need overall picture of what you have
- Single inventory database
- Regular inventory cycles
- Understand what you're managing & what you're managing for
- Incorporate with census data collection
- Canopy assessments are a simple tool needs to be coupled with more tools
- Effective maintenance depends on good information – we need both
- Make data useful to City
- Do tree inventory (basic version) through web-based tools and volunteers
- Inventory can potentially reduce permit fees – city would already have relevant info

Theme: Focus on management

Group comments:

- Need comprehensive policy to address issues / guide decisions
- Need to be able to fund & apply appropriately to work flow
- OSE to manage citywide need a directive to ensure priority in line departments to support this
- Value in tracking work is achieved only if resources for management are adequate to achieve goals
- Utilize crews – they input what they do on a daily basis – use their expertise
- Finance staff needs to be involved – part of team
- Info gathering should be closely linked to management decisions – not just info for its own sake. Justify investment
- Define info needs a head of time and target grants accordingly
- Need to have comprehensive map/receptacle that compiles info from various sources

Theme: Work with community to leverage resources

Group comments:

- Make better use of nonprofits do get community members working on ground
- Tap into community knowledge to learn more about trees; people look at them every day; can be cheaper than professional inventory
- Make it fashionable to care about your trees
- Neighborhood street fund grants
- Neighborhood groups and volunteers should be involved in info gathering
- Publicize the info we get so all interested parties get it.

Other comments:

- Tree crews shouldn't spend more time cutting trees than pruning – de-fund tree crews if they're just cutting
 - This is a tree safety issue; can't necessarily afford to prolong life of failing/older trees
- There should be more "troops on the ground" and fewer people "up top" – too much bureaucracy
- \$ from SPU related to stormwater code to regulate/enforce code
- Link to goals – air/water quality – species allocation or targeting species for maximum benefit in targeted areas
- Look at all green/conservation technologies – measure thru carbon offset >measure against trees for benefits
- One Northwest could develop Wiki or Google app
- Compile information from Arborist reports during permit apps

2. Our UFMP canopy goals by land use and the current canopy cover based on the new satellite study are below. Should we reconsider the goals for developed parks, downtown, and industrial areas?

Theme: Focus on quality over quantity

Group comments:

- Quality of canopy is important – evergreen v. deciduous
- 8,000 acres of forested public land - need to consider canopy cover as only aspect
- Require evergreen species in land use areas best suited industrial and forested areas
- Target performance – improve quality

Theme: Downtown

Group comments:

- Downtown – roof top, courtyard trees
- May require land purchase downtown
- Pocket park green areas in downtown / industrial areas may be easier than street trees in narrow areas

Theme: Industrial property

Group comments:

- Industrial - green roofs
- Manufacturing/industrial seems very high for typical lot configuration
- Focus on manufacturing / industrial – do more concrete cut-outs – requires political will – don't shy away from these areas just because they take more work – get buy-in from property owners / neighbors
- Downtown / industrial needs more regulation for green space – other areas are low-hanging fruit, taken care of through existing efforts
- Industrial areas are bleak so anything is good – can grow big trees there because they will get a lot of sun

Theme: Parks

Group comments:

- Why is canopy cover in developed parks decreasing?
- Look into Parks #
- Parks needs to maintain canopy cover
- Why is parks natural area goal lower than 2002 canopy

Theme: Right of Way trees

Group comments:

- Enhanced ROWs lead to improved landscapes on private property
- Potential to increase ROW trees – MLK Way, Bell Street Waterfront, ID streets, BLVDs

Theme: Institutional property

Group comments:

- There is room to increase canopy on institutional properties

Theme: Single family residential property

Group comments:

- SFR seems very low
- SF – jump from existing to goal seems small compared to other zones
- If SFR goal includes undevelopable lots/ROW, that should also make the goal higher
- Public education – what is the goal for your property

Theme: Multi-family property

Group comments:

- Multi-family areas not as affluent, need to address livability / green spaces in these areas
 - Sidewalk cut-outs in these areas

Other comments:

- Are the baseline numbers reliable – accurate, method needs to be endorsed
- Tie data collection together with Metro – bus drivers reporting pruning corridors
- Increases are conservative and reasonable
- Offer incentives
- Model benefits of existing canopy
- Decrease impervious land – allow for more plantable space
- Resource evaluate – on a volume basis
- Increase 30 year canopy goal
- Old buildings?
- Land use rules
- Goals should overly depend on new development – also include management of existing parcels
- How much space does IS take up? Could it add canopy?
- Gator bags aren't being filled with water, therefore useless
- Focus on maintaining trees in parks & streets rather than planting more than we can maintain
- Public agencies need to work together; city, school district, city depts. –need common vision

Goal 3

- 1. Preserving and enhancing canopy on private property requires widespread appreciation for trees and motivation to take action by individual property owners. There are a lot of great ideas for increasing community awareness and motivation for tree preservation and planting. What short list of these ideas will have the greatest impact?**

Theme: Work with community / neighborhood groups

Group comments:

- Communication thru Neighborhood councils/Sustainable Seattle groups/realtors

- Survey vacant lots in SF areas – purchase for City management – Manage through Neighborhood Councils
- On the ground work in neighborhoods; answering people’s tree questions directly – address fears, provide resources
- Get community involved in data collection
- Interactive maps, community online inventory
- Partner with community organizations – non-profits to promote interest in trees
- More Backyard Habitat program outreach
- Engage community group support – community centers
- Public/private partnerships – monetary and public use
- How to engage the greater community?
 - PR campaign – broad sell
 - Look at programs in other cities
- Community centers

Theme: Work with schools / kids

Group comments:

- Better education for kids – make them advocates for trees
- Make schools a model for tree planting and preservation
- Engage schools in education efforts
- Teach young people value of forest and possible careers
- Enlist youth
- Work with schools & youth

Theme: Work with professionals

Group comments:

- More/better communication between “tree people” and builder groups
- Better education for engineers/civils
- Regulate shoddy tree companies – better business bureau, isa

Theme: Focus on \$ / benefits

Group comments:

- Promote info on quantified benefits
- Communicate value of trees – actual \$\$
- Utilize software that translates canopy/inventory info into \$ benefits
- Don’t want benefits to go away, just need to be more targeted; need to address people’s real concerns – won’t keep tree b/c of stormwater benefits if they think tree will crush children
- Campaign/marketing to reinforce benefits (economic)
- PSAs on factoids- e.g. one tree provides x in economic benefit
- Economic value is not fully recognized

Theme: Targeted outreach / policy

Group comments:

- Better access to trees and tree info @ nurseries. City partnership w/retailers to provide better info
- Partnering with local media to build understanding / knowledge of benefits, tree function, importance – make them partners in outreach
- Property tax break for undeveloped lots – current use taxation/PBRS
- Critical areas / steep slopes w/ invasives – need to reach out to people with these properties – bill inserts
- People are excited about birds / merlins – tap into that market
- Create “management areas”, neighborhoods, watersheds, etc
- Encourage tree planting to signify a personal event – birth etc.
- Profile/promote cases where private groups have purchased/turned over pocket parks – what’s the process?
- Need new message; direct targeting, public meetings
- Why are trees important to individual property owners? -Drilled down efforts to educate individuals

Theme: Other messages besides benefits

Group comments:

- Emphasize green stormwater infrastructure over vaults
- Alternatives to cutting for views
- Maintain planted trees – proper tree care info
- “war on stumps” lost potential
- Teach public appropriate plant selection
- Education and incentives based on long term retention
- Educate public on new regulations and incentives
- Nike commercial – reduced production costs - \$8,000 for commercial
- Competing issues: Emerald City v. urban density
- Conflicting priorities/document tree loss one tree at a time – collective loss
- GSP messaging model –
 - How do we address long-term sustainability
 - Follow-up, connection, let volunteers see the benefits/link to the efforts

Theme: Outreach forums

Group comments:

- Big Arbor Day activities
- Hotline for info
- Utilize web networking sites as a tool for public education Facebook, Youtube
- What is the next market tool – Smokey the Bear

Other comments:

- Conservation easements
- Use fee dollars from private development and removal permits to fund private property plantings (not rate payer \$)
- Advance notification of building plans – earlier notice allows more consideration of options
- Direct regulation of invasives – fines
- People want to do the right thing
- Award – LEED sustainable sites initiative
- Ethics statement a new ISA certification requirement
- Agency set example – lead by example best practices
- Tree Ordinance – approval to a cut a tree
- Improve customer service in permitting process (streamline)
- Revisit regulations regarding lot size 70% of property is unregulated
- CPTED Requirement (police and security)
- Incentive program for exceeding coverage/adding to trees – retention of existing trees

2. **A successful program needs residents who are not only informed but also engaged, e.g. taking action themselves, volunteering, providing input on programs etc. What do you think are the 3 best mechanisms for creating ongoing engagement with a broad range of residents?**

Theme: Work in neighborhoods / with community groups

Group comments:

- Tree stewards among community members (had program earlier that lost funding)
- Neighborhood brigades to fill water bags, other little tasks to help neighborhoods
- Get frats to remove ivy off burke gilman – other groups / clubs that can be leveraged
- Community orchards where people adopt trees, are taught to prune, harvest – morph into program for other trees
- Expand DON tree planting program
- Promote participation in GSP
- “Citizen Pruner” - NY/LA administered by local non-profits
- Neighborhood sustainability initiatives/councils
- Madison Valley DON grant as an example of engaging neighborhood to manage stormwater
- Use neighborhood group energy
- Tap into public/leverage
- Make natural areas accessible and safe for families and kids
- Clear Coordinated messages out of existing groups would help

Theme: Work with schools

Group comments:

- Encourage kids programs
- Horticultural programs at schools / universities, leverage, work with them

- Work with kids – have kids plant and maintain trees

Theme: Award / recognition program

Group comments:

- Celebrate & recognize exceptional trees – award for exceptional trees
- Award people for having beautiful big trees – handed out by crews already in field when they see good examples – beat the bad people to the door
- Work with private tree companies to recognize people w/ great trees
- Adopt a tree, adopt a forest

Theme: Education / outreach

Group comments:

- Brochures on removing invasives; mail, downloadable, into bills
- Utility bill notices – SPU has good outreach strategies, work with them
- Education can't be abstract – on-site consultation is ideal

Theme: Funding / Political strategy

Group comments:

- Increase funding
- Reallocate resources to support true value of tree assets
- Bureau of Forestry overseeing other departments
- Connect trees to the greater city agenda/integrate
- Invest in a political strategist
- Educate bureaucracy on return v. investment for trees
- How do we engage the public to recognize and support trees as a priority
 - Non-profits can act as advocates/lobbyist
 - Citywide/regional PR campaign

Other comments:

- Cheap removal by professionals
- Tie it to concrete
- Timing – who are the advocates
- Free expert services would go a long way

Goal 4

- 1. Is a tree removal permit an appropriate strategy for regulating private property trees? How might a tree permit be implemented to limit tree removal without discouraging planting and while accommodating reasonable uses such as light access, solar panels, views, gardens etc?**

Theme: Focus on incentives

Group comments:

- It is a “stick” regulatory not incentive oriented – often disregarded/violated
- Can’t have a punitive system – more restrictions are bad, create impression of trees as a hassle, push people away

Theme: Make use of web-based technology

Group comments:

- On-line permit required to maintain inventory
- Require online session on benefits of trees before issuing a permit

Theme: Keep permit system simple

Group comments:

- Keep it simple
- Complicated permit will backfire
- Permits complicate the lives of tree companies
- Permit process should be streamlined
- Permits don’t stop companies from doing what they need to do – people will do what they want if it’s too complicated

Theme: Permits as educational opportunity

Group comments:

- Sends the message that tree removal is not okay unless there is a good reason to do so
- Permits cause people to pause before cutting; shouldn’t be able to clear cut property – permit creates teachable moment – permit should be easy to access
- People don’t want to clear cut their property – people just need information
- Permits are great for information – there should be criteria based on a management plan
- Need education and outreach to support permit concept
- Tie education to comparison w/neighbors- “The Joneses are saving X% on utilities because of their trees
- Post notification as part of permit
- Address multi-lingual reality in outreach efforts
- Canopy needs to be viewed as a natural resource (meet 30% goal)
- Plain language rules/code is needed – clear concise

Theme: Legal concerns

Group comments:

- Inconsistent enforcement (equity) –developers
- Complaint based enforcement – is this equitable?
- Improve interactions with legal department (limited by budgets)

Theme: Financial issues

Group comments:

- Funding mechanism – community loses a resources that is providing a public benefit
- Need a hefty fine for permit violation
- Fee in lieu of can become a buyout issues – lets people off too easily based on \$
- Make adding trees to lots financially viable to developers (offsets)
- Could decrease property values for properties with a lot of trees

Theme: Tree replacement

Group comments:

- Requirement to replant not necessary
- Require some kind of tree replacement for removal – link ratio of replacement to diameter of tree
- 10 little trees is not equal to 1 large tree

Theme: Enforcement

Group comments:

- 50 removal/50 pruning by tree service companies – regulate these services to control removal
- Don't worry about rush of tree cutting – that's the risk of any new reg
- Interim reg (3 trees/year) allows trees to go too fast- a permit per tree would allow more control
- Enforcement is critical
- Need City certification for tree removal specialists

Other comments:

- Permits are good – think of other ways to accommodate competing interests
- Permits don't have to be regulatory or punitive – just have people tell you when you're going to, don't necessarily tell them that they can't cut – make them think twice before cutting – more benefit from permit system than loss
- Other jurisdictions successfully use permit systems – needs to be balance, but now is imbalanced – current regulation isn't good
- Permits for each tree are crucial
- Community gardens instead of private gardens, creating room for trees on private property
- Hold tree removal of larger trees (24"+) to a very tight regulatory standard
- General support for a permit
- Build in appropriate setbacks for individual trees – increase longevity
- Native landscaping incentives v. bans or restrictions on invasive vegetation
- DNB Board legislation
- Threshold for permits
- Sliding scale for permitting process – low income (hazardous tree & renters)
- Permitting process aligned with clear goals
- There is decreasing space for street trees so plant appropriate trees which also maximize canopy

2. Incentives may be a useful tool to encourage planting and retention rather than relying on regulations alone. Potential incentives identified by the city include:

- Bulk Bonuses (extra lot coverage, height, FAR)
- Expedited permits for project with tree retention
- Property Tax Breaks/Rate Credits for homes with large trees
- Free Tree Giveaways
- Technical Assistance for construction tree protection

What incentives could best be utilized to encourage tree retention and planting? How would you prioritize these options given a limited budget?

Theme: Tax credits

Group comments:

- Rate credits are good idea, but rate is low to begin with, doesn't make a big incentive. Small financial incentive
- Tax rebates for canopy cover assessed by summer aerial photos
- Conservation easements – carve off a piece of property for green space permanently and get a tax break
- Shouldn't expect tax break for doing the right thing
- Tax breaks would undercut program funding – should be directly tied to actual infrastructure benefits

Theme: Education & Outreach

Group comments:

- Education
- Connect to other "green" issues – stormwater, etc
- Make info readily available
- Design outreach programs
- More outreach on tree benefits for public and architects, landscape architects
- Offer tree planting funds and education – not just for ROW but for private property
- More updated information on trees size, species, etc.

Theme: Technical assistance

Group comments:

- Technical assistance for removal, construction retention – assess to professionals who can mitigate, provide alternatives
- Technical assistance (free) for developers in design process

Theme: Panel/ arborist review of development/permits

Group comments:

- Panel of trade experts to examine development – don't be too restrictive on developers

- Require urban forester review of permits
- Tree review of development permits
- Tree board to consider individual sites would be more effective than citywide regulations

Theme: Awards

Group comments:

- Awards for good development / design
- City doesn't need to be the one handing out awards – other industries/ groups can do that – industries should recognize themselves – landscape architects should be involved, need to be worked with
- Give exceptional trees a recognition similar to heritage trees

Theme: Focus on developers

Group comments:

- Incorporate trees into LEED/Green Building requirements
- Tree included in P&D
- Incentives for developers (height, setbacks, lot coverage)
- Educated, proactive developers could see expedited permit process
- Education to developers on why/how to make the extra effort
- Tree retention can trigger design review and increase permitting – should be that way
- Strike development potential – just because you own a wetland doesn't mean you can develop it
- TDR's
- Encourage developers to design for the site, not force site to meet design; move tree protection up earlier in design process
- Push building green – including preservation of existing vegetation not just green building materials

Other comments:

- Preserve big trees; prioritize incentives to large/exceptional trees
- Designer view
- Working with / regulating realtors
- Tree giveaways don't work b/c people need to pay a bit to appreciate properly
- Big trees often outgrow their space – push on buildings – need to have exceptions to exceptions – need flexibility – system to protect big trees need to have flexibility for other priorities
- Examine prioritizing protection of native trees
- No variances / exceptions – draw a line – stronger ECA's
- Keep people's interests in minds
- Voluntary is not enough, need to stop people from making wrong choices
- Help preserve other smaller trees as well as exceptional trees
- Incentives should go above simply replacing trees removed

- Trees offset costs for storm water retention
- Expedited permits (after the recession when this would make a difference)
- Use remote sensing to credit property owners with high canopy cover and send a letter saying so
- County assessor – break out tree landscape value as % of total value
- Consider ‘green infrastructure overall trees/other veg/pervious surface etc.
- Protect all square footage associated w/existing trees to support tree and/or a replacement control the land not just the tree
- “Call before you cut”
- Very important
- How do you get private engaged in contributing to canopy
- Rethink “canopy cover” – target Green Factor tools – cooling, interception
- Rethink “urban design”
- Property owners without trees should contribute to tree fund
- Bulk bonuses do not make sense – make it harder to accommodate trees. Height or FAR make more sense than footprint
- Expedited permits and dedicated staff for green projects including tree preservation
- Safeguards – if there are any bonuses, there should be huge penalties for cutting trees later
- Protect soils and root zone – not just trees
- “Arbudsman” – City makes decision between competing arborist reports
- Retention of “other” trees
- Groves have bigger benefit – consider separately
- Focus on single family zones – a lot of potential for canopy expansion
- Identify preferred tree list not just for ROW

3. The City of Seattle currently requires that all healthy exceptional trees must be preserved during development unless doing so would prevent the project from meeting its development potential. Exceptional trees represent the largest trees of each species in the City and include about 5% of the total trees in the city. Other trees are not required to be retained; however, in most zones, there is either a minimum caliper requirement or a Green Factor score that must be achieved after development through retention or planting which encourages retention. How could we achieve more retention for additional trees during development?

Theme: Tree protection plan

Group comments:

- Specs in “tree protection plan” CAM
- Tree protection plan for both trees in ROW and on private property

Other comments:

- SEPA checklist review by DPD require arborist report
- Set exceptional tree threshold lower to save more trees – control the land to support trees not just trees

- Require min setbacks for exceptional trees on adjacent property
- MUP revise for projects that don't require street improvements
- Neighborhood incentives to promote higher canopy cover as factor of property value etc.
- LEED certification
- DLC required retention part of Green Factor
- Strategies to enhance canopy but not obstruct views
- Cheapest fastest growing trees
 - Regulations 2" caliper trees
- Use horticultural expertise to vet regulations
- Landscape architects are not horticulturists
- Certified horticulturalist stamp designs
- Should not look at Green roofs for canopy because they use planters that are removable and not permanent
- Revisit projects minimum specs
- Require bonds for landscapes
- Canopy as resource – i.e. wetlands