

Urban Forestry Commission (UFC)

July 11, 2012

Meeting Notes

Seattle Municipal Tower Room 2750
700 5th Avenue, Seattle
3:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.

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

Attending

Commissioners

Matt Mega (MM) – chair
John Small (JS)
Nancy Bird (NB)
Tom Early (TE)
Leif Fixen (LF)
John Floberg (JF)
Jeff Reibman (JR)

Absent- Excused

Peg Staeheli
Gordon Bradley (GB)

Staff

Sandra Pinto de Bader - OSE
Brennon Staley - DPD

Public

Michael Oxman
John Barber
Kendra Wagner
Margaret Thouless
Steve Zemke

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

MM – even though we don't have quorum yet, let's get started with public comment. The meeting is being recorded so Commissioners will be able to catch up.

Public comment

Michael Oxman – Today is the day we have looked forward to for a long time: the release of DPD's proposal and the update of the Urban Forest Management Plan after five years. With the lull in development caused by the economic recession, now is the time to put effective tree regulations in place, if we wait until development picks up again it will be more difficult. Make the regulations and the awareness of the benefits of trees more powerful. Two months ago rolled back their tree ordinance and five years ago Bellevue repealed their topping ordinance. In municipal tree ordinances and policies there is a plateau and then due to pressure from developers they roll them back. I want Seattle to move towards its canopy cover goals and then only way I can see to do that is through a permit system.

John Barber – I thought Michael was going to mention the need for a tree survey/inventory before the tree regulations can be implemented.

Kendra Wagner – Maple Leaf resident. Has followed many tree preservation efforts such as Waldo. We currently have a neighborhood fight against a residential development. DPD has been awesome, and responsive and receptive. I am very impressed. Some contractors are savvy enough to find their way around tree regulations. We are up in arms to protect tree canopy and trees in our neighborhood.

Margaret Thouless – Would like to comment on the Design Guidelines. In page one you show proposing removing ‘planting of deciduous’ trees. I think the term should stay because they shade buildings in summer time.

Steve Zemke – I’m not going to comment on the proposed tree ordinance because I have no idea of what’s in it at this point. Regarding the Design Guidelines I think it’s quite impressive what you’ve come up with. State the City’s goal to get to 30% and want Design Guidelines to help us meet the UFMP goals. Correct a typo. Sending it along for a lot of people but should be specifically be sent to the Mayor. Northgate Way they are removing 18 trees, some large oak trees, good specimens. Removal is due to the Pedestrian Master Plan. There was no opportunity to respond. I see more as a traffic improvement, not a pedestrian improvement. This project is going to remove a nice treed area from Northgate Way. You might want to review Roosevelt and 65th, SDOT tree crews were trimming trees very poorly. Are there any standards on how high up you prune trees? This is an area you might want to look at. They are doing a development right next to Kubota Gardens and there are concerns about that.

MM – SDOT does have standards but we have not looked at them in a while. Photos would be good. I have the information on the Kubota Garden development.

Approval of June 6 and June 13 meeting notes

ACTION: A motion was made to approve the June 6 meeting notes as written. The motion was seconded and carried.

ACTION: A motion was made to approve the June 13 meeting notes as written. The motion was seconded and carried.

Design Guidelines recommendation - vote

MM – this was a good process. A lot of people provided good input.

There was agreement to include an opening paragraph talking about the City goals, the UFMP, canopy cover and Design Guidelines. A typo will be corrected and cc to Mayor McGinn will be added. There was agreement not to re-introduce the term deciduous trees, the Commission wanted to provide more flexibility for evergreens as well. The language will remain as is.

ACTION: A motion was made to approve the Design Guidelines recommendation as amended. The motion was seconded and carried.

Urban Forest Management Plan update briefing – Sandra Pinto de Bader (OSE)

SPdB made a presentation on the UFMP update. Below are the slides:

Seattle's urban forest goal



Seattle's urban forest is a thriving and sustainable mix of tree and understory species and ages that creates a contiguous and healthy ecosystem that is valued by the City and all Seattle residents as an essential environmental, economic, and community asset.

Urban Forest Management Plan



- Created in April 2007
- Being updated in 2012
- Establishes 30% citywide canopy goal
- Long-, mid-, and short-term strategies for achieving goals
- Implemented through annual workplans
- Managed via an inter-departmental team

What's new since 2007

- Urban Forestry Commission created in 2009
- Created a new, permanent position in 2011 to manage Seattle reLeaf program
 - Outreach and engagement
 - Trees for Neighborhoods - 2,300 trees to date
 - Tree Ambassador - 40 in 13 neighborhoods
 - Urban Orchards Stewards - 56 in 5 orchards



What's new...

- Seattle Department of Transportation:
 - Street tree online map
 - Street Tree ordinance and Manual update



What's new...

- Parks and Recreation Department:
 - Green Seattle Partnership:
 - Over 800 acres in restoration
 - Over 500,000 volunteer hours
 - 130 Forest Stewards




What's new...

- Department of Planning and Development:
 - GreenFactor
 - Stormwater regulations and rates (with SPU)
 - Private property tree regulations update




What's new...

- **Tree sampling survey**
 - UW, King County, City of Seattle, and Forterra
 - 2010/2011 data from 223 plots
 - Information included in UFMP update:
 - Condition
 - Evergreen/deciduous breakdown
 - Size
 - Invasive species



UFMP 2012 Update

- Citywide canopy goal remains 30%
- Strategies remain the same, including focusing on outreach and engagement in residential areas
- New information on condition of urban forest (health, species, size, invasives) has been incorporated
- Short-, mid-, and long-term action agenda has been updated
- Research agenda added




Canopy Cover Goal

Land Use Category	2002 Canopy Cover	2007 Canopy Cover	UFMP Canopy Cover Goal
Commercial/Mixed Use	8.4%	8.7%	15%
Developed Park	25.0%	25.5%	25%
Downtown	4.2%	4.7%	12%
Major Institution	18.4%	19.4%	20%
Industrial	3.8%	4.3%	10%
Multi-Family	16.6%	17.1%	20%
Parks/Natural Area	82.5%	80.4%	80%
Single Family	25.2%	25.7%	30%
Total	22.5%	22.9%	30%

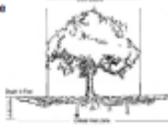
2012 update strategies

- Strategies remain the same but are reframed:
 - Understand
 - Coordinate
 - Preserve and restore
 - Regulate
 - Inspire, inform, and engage




Action Agenda

- Notable short-term actions:
 - Canopy cover assessments every five years
 - Continue two-for-one tree replacement
 - I-Tree data analysis
 - Tree planting potential data "ground-truthing"
 - Develop policy to prioritize expenditures
 - Explore expansion of tree planting incentives
 - Encourage right tree in the right place
 - Expand volunteer opportunities




Research Agenda

- Life-cycle costs of deferred tree planting and maintenance
- Costs/benefits of different pruning cycles
- Monetizing urban forest benefits (i.e. public health, energy, climate change)
- Method to quantify stormwater and water quality benefits



Public Outreach Process

- Public comment period July 11 – October 1, 2012
- Dedicated webpage (www.seattle.gov/trees/management.htm)
- Open House – August 1, City Hall, 5:30 – 7:30 p.m.
- Blogs, newsletters, and Listservs
- Neighborhood district councils & Scallops groups
- Non-profits
- Professional organizations (AIA, ISA, APA, AALA, R/E)



UFMP Update Contact

Questions or comments
2012 Urban Forest Management Plan update
contact:

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Public comment open through October 1, 2012

TE – were the two canopy cover assessments done to date done with the same data?

SPdB – yes, the first time around we used LIDAR with 2002/03 and 2007 data and the second we used satellite. We would like to have a new assessment using satellite again for comparison purposes.

JF – do you have any information on the accuracy interval?

SPdB – Canopy cover assessment technologies have 3-5% range of error. We showed decimal points to see if we could discern a trend. It's to guide us and give us an idea on a trend.

JF – We don't want to give the wrong idea that, for example, canopy cover in single family has gone up.

SPdB – if you apply the same margin of error to both sets of data, there has been a slight increase in canopy cover in single family areas. The goals haven't changed; we have stated in the updated document that we know we need to do additional work in this regard.

JF – how have the strategies been reframed?

SPdB – we used the strategies to organize the actions in the Action Agenda (closer to the end of the document). The caveat on the short term actions we'll be working on is that some of these initiatives are not fully funded at this time.

MM – Do you see the policy to prioritize expenditures as a joint IDT effort?

SPdB – I think this issue needs to be a decision made by the whole IDT. We'll be having that conversation in the next 1-5 years.

JF – who will be responsible for the Research Agenda?

SPdB – the IDT

MM – it seems like a simple thing but getting the Research Agenda in writing is already quite helpful.

MM – mainly the neighborhood district councils, non-profits, scallops groups are you inviting them or are you sending some information....

SPdB – we have created a one-pager that we'll be sending out and letting people know that if they would like us to come and make a presentation for their group, we'll be responding to invitations.

JF – at what level are you inviting comment?

SPdB – public comment is open to anything and everything. All comments are welcome.

NB – Will the Mayor and Council be adopting the updated plan?

SPdB – they will be issuing a joint resolution.

MM – the UFC sent a written request for Mayor and CC to formally adopt the UFMP and they responded that they would do that with the updated plan.

NB – what is the agenda for next week?

SPdB – we'll have the Seattle i-Tree report, then extended public comment, and at the end of the meeting we'll have the Mayor come in to receive feedback on both documents directly from the UFC.

MM – ideally we would have liked the Mayor to come visit with us in September, but as we get closer to budget his entire calendar was filled, that's why we had to rush it.

JF – Has he asked about the urban forest?

SPdB – before we can move forward to public comment, we are required to brief the Mayor and Senior Staff on the plan. We brought the plan and other efforts to his attention. He gave us the go-ahead.

MM – we have the Mayor for a short time. We'll coordinate our input.

JS – you mentioned that SPU/DPD are coordinating in storm water.

Brennon – We have been talking to SPU about future stormwater credit. Trying to make rate-setting more specific.

JS – are you planning to address the long term funding.

SPdB – there is a funding section after the Action Agenda.

DPD Tree Ordinance briefing – Brennon Staley (DPD)

NOTE: for details on Q&A during the presentation, please refer to the digital recording at <http://www.seattle.gov/urbanforestrycommission/meetingdocs.htm>

Seattle DPD Tree Regulations Proposal


July 11, 2012



Department of Planning and Development

Timeline to Date


- 2007 – Urban Forest Management Plan
- 2007 – Emerald City Task Force
- 2008 – Stakeholder Meetings
- Feb 2009 – Interim Regulations
- Sept 2009 – Revised Stormwater Code
- Nov 2009 – Council Resolution 31138
- Dec 2010 – Green Factor Update
- July 2010 – Draft Proposal
- July 2012 – Revised Proposal



Department of Planning and Development

Lessons Learned



- Certain tree removal limitations can not be effectively implemented without permits
- Focus on preservation of largest tree on dense lots is problematic
- SF tree requirements are not achieving canopy cover goals
- Enforcement outside of development is challenging and costly



Department of Planning and Development

Canopy Cover Analysis


- 22.5% in 2003 → 22.9% in 2007
- Slight increases across all areas except parks - both private property and ROW
- Certain unknown
- Redeveloped parcels
 - 1.8% of parcels
 - SF: 30% → 17%
 - MF: 17.7% → 5.4%
 - C: 6.5% → 4.3%

Department of Planning and Development

Goal of Proposal


To advance the goals of the Urban Forest Management Plan to maintain and enhance a thriving and diverse urban forest that maximizes the environmental, economic, and social benefits of trees, while recognizing other citywide goals and policies for sustainability and growth management relating to density, transportation, housing affordability, and urban design; and accommodating property owner's desires for solar access, solar energy, gardens, accessory structures, views, access, and risk management.



Department of Planning and Development

What's Different from Original?

- Make Exceptional Tree Restrictions permanent but simplify to make them easier to understand, implement & enforce
- Modified Single Family Tree Requirements
- Allow SF fee-in-lieu for up to 50%
- No maintenance bonds



Department of Planning and Development

Exceptional Tree Definition

- Move from complex definition to 24" diameter threshold
- Existing definition required arborist to assess property
- Existing diameter thresholds range from 12" to 30" with 24" most common
- According to iTree analysis 14% of trees in SF, MF, and Commercial are 24" in diameter

Exceptional Tree Regulations

- Allow removal of trees causing physical damage to buildings or utilities that cannot be mitigated
- Remove the exemption for single family lots less than 5,000 sq ft in size
- Remove the limit on removal of more than three non-exceptional trees per year
- Simplify criteria for removal during development

Removal Application

- Tree Removal Application
 - Move to online tree removal application
 - Implement tree removal application fee to offset cost of review; initial fee will be set at \$177 and will increase annually



Single Family Tree Requirements

- Applies to new or replaced homes
- 1 credit/200 sq ft after first 2000 sq ft
- 25% bonus for evergreen
- Up to 50% can be met through fee-in-lieu; \$200 per credit

Tree Provided	Point Value
New small species tree	1
New small/medium species tree	2
New medium/large species tree	3
New large species tree	4
Preserved tree 6" and greater	One point for each inch of diameter

Additional SF Regulations

- Implement tree requirements for institutions in SF zones
- Require street trees during development of new or replaced homes in SF zones



Industrial Areas


- Add Green Factor requirement for commercial and retail development over 4,000 sq. ft. in size in Industrial areas



Other Changes


- Simplify the process for allowing departures to height, setbacks, and parking to preserve large trees during development
- Updating enforcement process to improve the effectiveness and reduce the cost of enforcement



 Department of Planning and Development


Overview

- Making existing exceptional tree regulations more effective
- Applying more rigorous landscaping standards during construction
- Expanding the scope of existing regulations, such as to institutions in single-family zones and retail and commercial uses in industrial zones
- Improving enforcement process

 Department of Planning and Development

Next Steps

- Open House – August 1st
- Public Comments ends – October 1st
- Legislation to Council – Early 2013


 Department of Planning and Development

More Info

www.seattle.gov/dpd/planning/trees

www.seattle.gov/trees

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 Department of Planning and Development

Adjourn