

SEATTLE URBAN FORESTRY COMMISSION

Peg Staeheli, Chair • Tom Early, Vice-Chair
Gordon Bradley • Leif Fixen • Donna Kostka • Jeff Reibman • Erik Rundell • Steve Zemke

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 4, 2014

Meeting Notes

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

Attending

Commissioners

Peg Staeheli - chair
Tom Early – vice-chair
Gordon Bradley
Leif Fixen
Donna Kostka
Erik Rundell
Steve Zemke

Staff

Sandra Pinto de Bader - OSE
Brennon Staley - DPD
Sara Zora - SDOT
Ian Macek - SDOT

Public

Michael Oxman

Absent- Excused

Jeff Reibman

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

Sandra called to order.

Public comment

Michael Oxman – today we are looking at the Comp Plan. I think there is too much in the Comp Plan and has conflicting messages. I went to the Climate Action Plan presentation by the Mayor and asked him how he reconciles the loss of trees and the increased density and development. He responded that we should plant smaller trees and I don't think that's the right answer.

The Planning Commission supports development and the UFC might not be able to do much about it.

Approval of May 7 and May 14 meeting notes

ACTION: A motion was made to approve the May 7 meeting notes as written. The motion was seconded and carried.

ACTION: A motion was made to approve the May 14 meeting notes as amended. The motion was seconded and carried.

Comp Plan update briefing – Brennon Staley (DPD)

Brennon Staley – will be leading the update to the Capital Facilities, Utilities, and Environment elements.

Question: What’s the City’s relation to the Growth Management Act?

Answer: The Comp Plan (CP) is the City’s effort to comply with the Growth Management Act. Different jurisdictions work together to make sure that the policies are in alignment.

Question: The urban forest is something regional. Is there coordination among jurisdictions?

Answer: The CP is a high-level document. The level of coordination and planning you are referring to doesn’t happen at the CP level. The amount of energy individual municipalities puts forward for a coordinated effort varies.

One of the main elements of the CP is the urban center concept. Look at ways to have these urban centers be livable. The strategy is to focus on the infrastructure to support growth in the following areas:

- Six urban centers (UC)
- Six hub urban villages (HUV)
- 18 residential urban villages (RUV)
- Two manufacturing and industrial centers (MIC)

Question: Are there going to be efforts to support growth in south Seattle?

Answer: When you remove the green belt and industrial area, South Seattle actually has a large concentration of urban villages. The strategy has been successful over the last 20 years. 75% of new housing has been developed in urban villages. 73% of new jobs have come to UC + HUV, and MIC.

Seattle 2035 is a citywide conversation about how Seattle may grow. There will be a major review of the existing plan and coordination/collaboration with City departments and the Seattle Planning Commission.

The schedule:

Early engagement started in 2011-2012. In the Spring of 2013 the annual amendment included the Climate Action Plan, Healthy Food, Urban Design, and Transit Communities.

Project planning and research: Q3 2013 – Q1 2014.

Assess Growth Alternatives and Draft Plan Policies: Q1 2014 – Q4 2014.

City Council Review – Q1 – Q2 2015

Plan adoption – June 2015

By 2035 is expected that Seattle will have 120,000 more people, 70,000 more households, and 115,000 more jobs.

Three alternatives proposed for study are:

- Urban center focus
- Urban village focus
- Transit focus

Question: Aren’t all the same?

Answer: They are different flavors of the same. There could be a ‘no action’ option too.

Given the way the City invests and make zoning decisions, we have some influence over where development happens in the city. We are analyzing the impacts of the different strategies.

Plan style and format:

We are trying to produce a document that is more accessible and usable for the public and policy makers. Increase clarity, reduce redundancy, and ensure relevance. Looking for a pared down document that is available in electronic format.

Question: What happens to neighborhood pieces that were put into the CP over the years?

Answer: We are having the new structure address those issues. We are not planning on changing the neighborhood plans.

Question: Where is Parks?

Answer: Parks will be part of capital facilities. We are considering having a separate element for Parks.

Question: Under elements there is one called Environment. What does it include?

Answer: It has changed more than any other element since 2004 and it is currently linked to many things. Right now it's a hodge-podge and we would like to see it more streamlined.

Element structure:

Each element will have an introduction and different topics/sessions. Goals and policies will go into each of the policies

I passed out a list of all the areas that touch upon urban forestry. There are different sections that relate to trees:

Environment Element – Seattle's Trees Section (E21, E22, E23, E24)

Environment Element – Related Items (E3, E4, E5, E6)

Land Use Element – General Development Standards (Tree Policy subsection – LU39, LU40, LU41)

Land Use Element – Landscaping and screening (LU38, LU53.1)

Land Use Element – Industrial (LU150, LU151, LU165, LU174)

Question: Assume we are changing the Seattle Trees section to Urban Forestry (UF)?

Answer: Some initial thoughts I'd like to put forward for discussion. Having UF goals in the environment section and then mention trees also in other sections (such as development standards). For example, the UF goal put in the Comp Plan is 40% and it did not go through public process. The Urban Forest Stewardship Plan (UFSP) has a new vision that could be better reflected in the plan.

Overall we are trying to have fewer topics, succinct titles, all should include goals and policies, avoid overarching goals and policies that apply to more than one topic, and keep the topic discussion brief.

UFC comment: We've had the UFC for 5 years now. We have a new UFSP. I think the Environment Element needs to address urban forestry specifically. The Climate Change section has very specific goals.

Brennon: That level of detail is not appropriate.

Question: Our ROWs are very narrow and development is to the property line. Is that broad enough that could fit in the update? Maybe say Update the policies on high-rise residential.

Answer: That could go into a landscaping section

UFC comment: If trees are infrastructure then there is a gap. What do you mean by tree policy approach focused on individual large trees?

Brennon: We are starting to change our thinking in industrial areas. There is current policy that I would like the Commission to weigh in on.

Question: What is the UFC's role in this process? Are we going to receive drafts and provide input?

Answer: Things become public when we bring things to the UFC.

Question: How about bringing issues to a sub-committee of the UFC so it's not a public interaction?

Answer: We don't want to distribute documents to different groups of people.

UFC comment: We need to put together a sub-committee that will chat with DPD on what we would like to see in the Comp Plan and then provide general comments when the document is public.

Brennon: That's why I'm here.

Question: Are you leaning towards referring to the UFSP in order to reduce redundancy?

Answer: We are not going to mention plans and policies, because there are too many. The Comp Plan is meant to be a very high level document. We will mention the citywide canopy cover goal.

Question: Incongruent statement for industrial areas. Will this be an opportunity to change that?

Answer: If we think the City's policy has changed we might want to express that.

Question: We have a 30% canopy cover goal, but there are many policies that do not support this goal. Do we need to make a statement to that effect?

Answer: The Comp Plan needs to stay at a very high level.

Question: Where do these policies start to work together?

Answer: They work together at the Urban Forest IDT level.

UFC Comment: We have a gap between Comp Plan and policies. A high level statement would not be in contradiction with the UFSP urban forestry goals.

The City is proposing a new goal for Green Stormwater Infrastructure (GSI).

Leif, Steve, Erik will volunteer to provide input to DPD on the Comp Plan update.

Freight Master Plan update – Sara Zora (SDOT)

Sara Zora and Ian Macek – this introduction will provide an opportunity for the Commission to provide input on the plan as it is developed.

The Freight Management Plan's (FMP) purpose is to improve citywide truck freight mobility to support Seattle's increasing demand for goods and services by addressing: safety, efficiency, environmental impacts, and economic vibrancy.

Scope of Work:

- Public outreach and stakeholder engagement: will be important to engage the business in industrial areas and understand their needs.
- Existing conditions report: will be important to tell the story of where we are with freight mobility. Important to identify a baseline.
- Policy framework (vision statement, goals, and performance measures).
- Evaluation of future conditions, including forecasting.

- Updated freight network and design guidelines: 142 miles of major truck streets. We'll review usage and making changes. Bigger freight has 20 feet high and 20 feet wide requirements.
- Prioritized projects and programs.
- Implementation strategy.

Is there other baseline that we should consider related to urban forestry?

UFC Comment – we talked about alternate routes that are used by freight and might not be maintained at the same level.

The City of Seattle doesn't have formal 'alternate routes.'

Question: Are there rules in terms of where freight can go? What if they use other routes?

Answer: Freight is allowed in all city arterials. We are hoping that freight is using major truck streets. We will use traffic flow count tools for that.

Question: What about snow routes?

Answer: That is going to be good to look into.

UFC comment: it would be interesting to know what would be the canopy cover potential if the required clearances are maintained.

Answer: That could be something we look at.

Considerations for FMP:

- Balance safety and mobility priorities with canopy cover goals.
- UFSP goal: strive to replace, enhance, and increase urban forest functions, and related environmental, economic, and social benefits. FMP considerations: trees in industrial areas to mitigate truck and GHG emissions. Trees adjacent to manufacturing and industrial centers (MICs) to buffer social and environmental impacts.
- UFSP goal: expand citywide canopy cover to 30% by 2037. FMP considerations: street tree guidelines, funding strategy to regularly prune freight corridor ROW trees.
- Industrial areas comprise 11% of the city land mass. Baseline: 4% canopy cover in 2007. Goal is 10% by 2037. FMP considerations: street design guidelines and programmatic recommendations.

Project schedule:

June – project launch

Summer – stakeholder engagement

Fall – draft existing conditions and policy framework

Spring 2015 – final freight master plan

Come back in the fall to report progress.

Letter of recommendation to DPD on reporting UFC would like to see – possible vote

Commissioners discussed the current draft letter and a second draft will be discussed at the next meeting.

Suggestions:

- Table be included as an attachment.

UFC gets a lot of complaints about tree removals. If we are not tracking removals under development, we have no data to know how development is impacting canopy cover. We could add a couple of lines to the Green Factor sheet and report on it. If required under submittal documents this would not be a significant amount of additional work.

We need to let DPD know that we are currently not getting information about what's happening with trees on a land use base to understand what's happening in development. We don't have a prototype, or tests, or reporting. We as a Commission are getting constantly complaints from the public about tree removals. DPD is the only place that control private property, under development or not.

A second draft will be discussed in order to get the letter out by next week.

Race and Social Justice. Community outreach – stakeholder engagement – UFC membership – continues (standing agenda item) – N/A

New business and announcements

None

Adjourn

Community input

None