

Open Letter to the Urban Forestry Commission

Re: The Comprehensive Plan update

This is our once in 10 year chance to get it right. Please check out these suggestions.

In my opinion, goals are best set by thinking of what should be done, not by what is likely to be achieved.

Thank you for all the good work you do. You are our best hope. Please see below.

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Written the help of several 'tree people' in the larger community, here is a 14 item wish list for the new Seattle Comprehensive Plan.

1) The most essential element for urban forestry in the comp plan is **retaining the canopy goal of 40%**. All the major cities in the nation have canopy goals. For comparison Philadelphia's goal is 30%, Washington D.C.'s is 40%, and Pittsburgh's is 60%. Similarly we should retain the **no-net loss of canopy** cover goal.

2) Add a more **comprehensive list of Urban Forestry benefits** to in the vision statement. Sample. "*the Urban Forest is one of Seattle's most valued capital and cultural assets. It is an integral component of a healthy, livable, environmentally responsible, and economically robust city. It provides essential green infrastructure, social and ecosystem services. Because of the pressures of urbanization and population density we recognize that maintaining a diverse, healthy and sufficient Urban Forest requires more than just tree planting. It requires commitment, human and political intervention and ongoing stewardship.*"

3) Add **specific Urban Forestry goals to each separate element of the Comprehensive Plan**. Those elements are: transportation, land use, utilities, health, environmental sustainability, livability, social justice, and economics. The benefits of trees cross-agency but the canopy is administered and funded per single agency budget. The urban canopy should be referred to as an **essential public service** and a **capital asset** which is both publically and privately owned.

4) The comprehensive plan or the UF ordinance authorizes the creation of a **Tree Fund for the promotion, protection and expansion of UF**. The fund is not to be used in lieu of regular department funding. Funds may consist of donations, grants, general funds, taxes, collections of tree related penalties and fees, mitigation fees, fees in lieu of tree-replacement or preservation. Funding is tied to amount of development and gray infrastructure (concrete) investment.

**5) Comprehensive plan recognizes the Urban Forestry Commission and The Urban Forest Stewardship Plan.**

6) The City, working through the Urban Forestry Commission, will create an annual **State of Urban Forest Report**. To do so, the named authority (Commission or DSE) is authorized to require **regular inventories**, collect data through the use of a tree removal permit system and track tree planting. Tree canopy impact assessments are required for changes to building codes and city policies. The State of the Urban Forest Report may include assessment of customer service and enforcement practices.

7) Comprehensive plan authorizes the Urban Forest Commission's updates to **the Urban Forest Stewardship Plan and sees that recommendations are incorporated** into City planning, budgets, laws and enforcement practices.

8) **Revise open space goals upward.** Since the amount of potential canopy cover is determined by the total amount of planting spaces (the combination of public and private open space) we should revise these goals upward, not downward. The nationally recognized goal for public open space is cities 1 acre for every 100 residents. The current proposed comprehensive plan proposes .5 acres per every 1,000 residents in Urban Villages.

This goal should be revised heavily upward because the UVs lack the private open space.

Simultaneously, they are subject to intensified effects of urbanization such as increasing storm water runoff, the heat island effect, lack of habitat, particulate air and noise pollution.

Similarly the comprehensive plan lacks sufficient open space goals in manufacturing-industrial area.

Current recommendation of *no open space requirements* should be replaced. The zone land is closest to water courses and wetlands; has increased amounts of concrete that produces stormwater run-off overloads; and which exacerbates the Heat Island effect; and these areas are the least 'livable' of the lower income wage earners who work there and reside nearby.

9) **Authorize creation of the Department of Sustainability and the Environment to achieve Urban Forestry goals.** OSE becomes DSE and it is the official lead agency and advocate for Urban Forestry in Seattle. DSE receives the authority, responsibility, and fiscal support which will be sufficient to reach canopy goals.

10) DSE (or other entity) is authorized to appoint a **City Forester who will have singular authority** over all City Department arborists.

11) **City Forester coordinates goals and activities** between departments and other City institutions, and the City's many UF stakeholders.

12) DSE or OSE is mandated to **create a tree preservation ordinance** with input from all stakeholders.

13) **DSE is tasked with oversight** and integration of various planning documents, ordinances, codes and policies with regards to the Urban Forest.

Respectfully,  
Cass Turnbull  
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Founder/President