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*

May 14, 2014
Meeting Notes
SMT 2750
700 5ᵗʰ Avenue, Seattle
3:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.

Attending

Commissioners	Staff
Peg Staeheli - chair	Sandra Pinto de Bader
Tom Early - vice-chair	Jennifer Wieland - SDOT
Gordon Bradley	Sara Zora - SDOT
Leif Fixen	Emily Ehlers - SDOT
Donna Kostka	
Erik Rundell	Guests
Steve Zemke	Amalia Leighton - SvR

Absent- Excused	Public
Jeff Reibman	None

*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
Peg Staeheli read the Commission's mission and today's agenda.

Chair report
Sandra sent out a link today. It has some interesting information regarding Minnesota's
Evapotranspiration Credit System for Trees.

SDOT's trees and sidewalks operations plan
RECUSAL: Peg's company, SvR is working on this project, so Peg will be recusing from the conversation.

Jennifer Wieland (SDOT) presented the project purpose and goal and an assessment tool that she wants
to introduce to the Commission.

The Purpose of this project is to develop options to address tree/sidewalks conflicts using case studies to
illustrate applications. They are working on case studies in Madrona, Lake City, and Rainier Beach.

Goals:
Accessibility and health

Environment
Equity
Efficiency

Draft assessment process: brings together different processes already in place. Decision-making around trees and sidewalks has not been transparent in the past due to the complexity of the process. SDOT has not had the resources to make information on the decision-making process available to the public more clearly.

The process gives the opportunity to SDOT to be more explicit about how different policies come into play and how they relate to the urban forestry goals SDOT is working to accomplish, including the 30% canopy cover goal.

When there is a conflict between trees and sidewalks (whether it's a single tree or a corridor) both an SDOT engineer and arborist come together on site with a check list to determine what to do:
- Keep tree and repair sidewalk
- Remove tree and repair sidewalk
- Evaluate further – If there is not enough information at the site meeting. The team works to gather more information and continue to explore solutions.

The checklist addresses several questions:
- Is tree healthy and worthy of preservation?
- Is tree in poor health or poor vigor; is there chronic trunk wounding?
- Is tree hazardous?
- Does tree present a public safety hazard in terms of visibility or accessibility?

The 800 block of 34th Ave in the Madrona neighborhood was used to test the checklist. Sidewalk width required is 4 feet. They looked at several trees, some of which were in good health and didn't have overhead power lines> There was insufficient sidewalk width but there was enough space to repair the sidewalk and preserve the tree. In some cases trees were not in good health so the determination was to remove them. Other cases required additional information due to the presence of a driveway, a retaining wall, and potentially other utilities that might be on the way.

Question:
What if there is an invasive tree (Holly) on the abutting private property? Does the City have the authority to ask the property owner to prune or remove the Holly to provide more space for the healthy street tree?
Answer:
SDOT would work with the property owner based on the determination on health and preservation worthiness of the existing street tree. If trees are replaced, maybe because they are too large for the location and they are running into power lines, then the replacement tree would be of smaller scale.

Amalia Leighton – SvR
The project team is looking at best practices on the following elements:
- Current and emerging national and international policies, programs, and practices
- Current SDOT practices
- Tree size
- Tree valuation
- Tree maintenance
- Root maintenance

- Root structure evaluation
- Sidewalk pavement types
- Sub-base installation
- Soil conditions
- Nutrients
- Water and irrigation
- Utility compatibility
- Accessibility and ADA
- Surface maintenance
- Street edge conditions

Solutions toolkit:
The toolbox has Tree-based, Rootzone-based, infrastructure-based/design, and infrastructure-based/materials solutions. The toolkit will be a public-facing document that will provide ways to get an idea of the relative cost and duration of the solution.

Question:
Has there been any talk to design this as a triage system to determine which trees get the extra budget?
Answer:
Part of the value in setting up the initial assessment is that we are prioritizing the condition of the tree. How do you value when it is appropriate to make a certain investment. We have not yet determined that.

Question:
What is the budget range used to save a tree?
Answer:
There is not a hard and fast rule. We don't have enough budget to do everything we want to do, but hopefully this project will help us make the budget case for trees. We can't give you one number. If the initial assessment is simple enough then there will be savings of resources (faster decisions) and there will be more money to apply to preserving trees.

Question:
What would be the notification process for neighbors?
Answer:
There is a time for public outreach to let the community know, it might be a sign posted on the gtree or other online resources, etc. We have not yet determined this.

Project at Columbia and 25th – success story where trees were retained and sidewalk conditions were improved.

Next Steps:
May 9 – online survey
May 29 – Madrona corridor meeting #3
June 10 – Lake city corridor meeting #2
June 11 – Rainier Beach corridor meeting #2
Late June – draft operations plan
July – final operations plan
Fall - sidewalk repair in Madrona

Bicycle Master Plan (BMP) update
Sara Zora (SDOT) and Emily Ehlers (SDOT – Neighborhood Greenways project manager) did a briefing on the Bicycle Master Plan update.

SDOT's mission is to deliver a first=rate transportation system for Seattle. The Vision is a vibrant Seattle with connected people, places, and products. SDOT's core principles are:
- Keep it safe
- Focus on the basics
- Build healthy communities
- Support a thriving economy, and
- Provide great service

Background: BMP update launched in 2012. Council provided clear direction:
- Include cycle track s and neighborhood greenways
- Incorporate new standards based on NACTO (National Association of City Transportation Officials) Urban Bikeways Guide, and
- Develop clear prioritization framework

The team held community meetings and presentations to the Seattle Bicycle Advisory Board and other agencies. The draft plan was released November 2013 with a briefing to the Transportation Committee in December.

The key purposes of the updated plan are:
- Plan, design, and build a bicycle network for people of all ages and abilities
- Focus network more on non-arterial streets (neighborhood greenways and off-street trails)
- Address competing needs among travel modes on arterials
- Emphasize safety

The BMP policy framework's vision: riding a bicycle is a comfortable and integral part of daily life in Seattle for people of all ages and abilities.
The Plan's goals are:
- Ridership – increase the amount and mode share of bicycle riding in Seattle for all trip purposes
- Safety – improve safety for bicycle riders in Seattle
- Connectivity – create a high-quality bicycle network that connects to places people want to go and provides a time-competitive travel option
- Equity – improve bicycle riding for all through equity in public engagement, program delivery, and capital investments
- Livability – build vibrant communities by creating a welcoming environment for bicycle riding.

Question:
Definition of greenway. Is it vegetation related?
Answer:
They are residential streets that are optimized for pedestrian and bicycles. The idea is to provide a safer environment for bicycles; greenery is an important component. Still working on how to incorporate vegetation during project implementation. At this point the focus is on the transportation component. Version 2.0 will include more placemaking elements. In the future they will look at more elements in the right-of-way.

Question:
Is there a component that calls for additional tree planting?
Answer:

Doesn't specifically call for tree planting. The Project Team is working with SPU on rain garden plantings and with Trees for Neighborhoods.

Question:
You mentioned you are considering bio-swales and rain gardens. SDOT could coordinate with SDOT Urban Forestry to include tree planting.

Answer:
Yes. In Ballard they identified the blocks that SPU wants to work on with bioswales and rain gardens. In Delridge SDOT came up with the greenway route at the same time SPU came up with their project route. SPU will build and SDOT will pay them to install the facilities.

UFC Comment:
Some programs are not working towards accomplishing the 30% canopy cover goal stated in the Urban Forest Stewardship Plan. That could be incorporated to the BMP.
Response:
In the future we will be incorporating more green elements into the implementation of the BMP.

Question:
What about the missing link of the Burke Gilman trail?
Answer:
We didn't provide much detail but we have a clear vision of what that missing link would look like.

Sara will come back in June to present the Freight Master Plan process. A more tailored understanding about the types of trees that might come into the industrial areas would be helpful. They have alternate routes that often have major conflicts with trees and are not on the radar of the Freight Master Plan. Explore funding for freight-specific pruning.

Question:
Is the BMP implementation funded by General Fund?
Answer:
We go for grant funding too, but at this time is mostly General Fund.

Question:
There is a part of Seattle that doesn't have sidewalks. How does the plan apply to those areas?
Answer:
Those neighborhoods ask for sidewalks before anything related to the BMP. But don't have the budget for that. Slow traffic down the traffic on the street. Use existing traffic circles, install speed bumps.

Question:
A lot of the greenways include islands to slow traffic. Have anyone considered including trees in those islands?
Answer:
The response from the public is that people are not used to islands yet and are hitting the poles. There is not a lot of island space. Fire has an issue with some of the streets because the medians preclude them to get around traffic.

Comment:
This is a great opportunity to include trees when implementing.

Letter of recommendation to DPD on reporting UFC would like to see
We don't want to do this too complicated. We don't have anything going on in terms of the ordinance or metrics from private development. It would seem that it is not an ordinance change, it's an operations level to send to DPD and Council. Come up with a mechanism to do better tracking maybe Green Factor related to Trees.

Having difficulty evaluating what's going on in the private development sector. Asking them to provide more information, what trees are being removed? Having more information would help them decide the route the Ordinance would take. One of the issues is that of trees being replaced.

Council would be more interested in understanding the numbers. We only have a couple of data points regarding canopy cover.

We don't have an ordinance on the table for this year. Title would be: tracking trees on private property for future ordinance update. Then they'd have data to determine what kind of ordinance they will have. This is an opportunity to bring them back to the UFSP to describe the canopy cover and i-tree metrics. What we are trying to figure out is what our canopy trends are.

Letter of support for Plant Amnesty's application to King Conservation Grant
Would it be helpful for Plant Amnesty to get a grant to support their work and help accomplish the UFSP goals, is the UFC supportive of that?

ADD plant amnesty's UF symposium experience to the letter.

> **ACTION**: **A motion was made to approve the letter as amended. The motion was seconded and carried.**

Race and Social Justice. Community outreach and stakeholder engagement - continues
Will keep this item on the agenda for ongoing consideration.

Public comment
None

New business and announcements

Adjourn