

SEATTLE URBAN FORESTRY COMMISSION

Tom Early, Chair • Steve Zemke, Vice-Chair
Gordon Bradley • Leif Fixen • Mariska Kecskes • Donna Kostka • Richard Martin • Joanna Nelson de Flores
Jeff Reibman • Erik Rundell

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

February 10, 2016

Meeting Notes

Seattle Municipal Tower, Room 2750 (27th floor)
700 5th Avenue, Seattle

Attending

Commissioners

Tom Early – chair
Steve Zemke – vice-chair
Weston Brinkley (not voting)
Leif Fixen
Mariska Kecskes
Donna Kostka
Richard Martin
Joanna Nelson de Flores
Erik Rundell
Andrew Zellers (not voting)

Staff

Sandra Pinto de Bader - OSE
Jana Dilley – Seattle reLeaf

Public

None

Absent- Excused

Gordon Bradley
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

Tom called the meeting to order and read the UFC's mission and agenda.

Public comment

None

Chair report

DPD sent a letter or response to the UFC recommendations on the Comp Plan. Sandra read it.

Seattle reLeaf update

Jana Dilley gave an update on Seattle reLeaf program 2015 accomplishments. Seattle reLeaf's mission is to engage the public in the stewardship of the urban forest to achieve a sustainable and resilient ecosystem benefitting all Seattle residents.

The program has four focus areas: Outreach, communications, technical assistance; volunteer engagement; Residential planting; and Interdepartmental, Community, and Regional Work.

Outreach, Communications, Technical Assistance

- Engaged 2,325 people
- Hosted 50 events
- Launched monthly e-newsletter
- 390 technical assistance requests
- 18,700 web users
- 376 facebook followers
- 85 people at Park(ing) Day
- Highlight: Arbor Day
 - o 75 people attended
 - o 9 community partners
 - o 5 departments
 - o Mayor and Washington State Commissioner of Public Lands
 - o 5 trees planted
 - o Tree walk
 - o New tree pits along Corson

Volunteer Engagement

- 1,800 volunteer hours
- Trained 28 new Tree Ambassadors
- 7 volunteer trainings
- 13 landscape renewal event
- \$6K grant from King Conservation District
- Highlight: Tree walks
 - o 21 tree walk events
 - o 17 neighborhoods
 - o 11 new self-guided walks
 - o 37 total walks available

Residential Planting

- Planted 1,010 trees with 422 households
- 722 people at pickup events
- 2 structural pruning workshops for 42 people
- 2 site and species selection workshops for 75 people
- 10 summer watering reminders to 1,750 households
- 42 cubic yards of mulch distributed
- Highlight: Field evaluation:
 - o Data collected on 643 street trees planted between 2009-2014
 - o Feedback 'report cards' provided to residents
 - o 71% 5-year survival rate

Interdepartmental, Community, and Regional Work

- Permitted 268 street trees with SDOT
- 61 replacement trees for SCL customers
- Supported SPU drought response
- Served on KCD Urban Forestry working group
- Participated in Duwamish Alive coalition
- Supported DIRT Corps
- Highlight: West Seattle Traffic Triangle
 - o Joint project with SDOT
 - o SDOT removed dead trees and pruned remaining
 - o 29 volunteers removed weeds, planted 3 new trees
 - o 2 events

Urban Forest Equity

- Focus on south Park and Georgetown neighborhoods
- Targeted Trees for Neighborhoods outreach to Vietnamese residents
- South Park Spanish Tree Walk and Fiestas Patrias outreach
- Door-to-door Trees for Neighborhoods outreach Hillman City
- Participate in Find it, Fix it event
- Highlight: Elderly and Disables planting assistance
 - o Trained 4 volunteers to plant 18 trees for 8 residents in need
 - o Offered additional support for utility location and site selection
 - o Delivered trees to homes without vehicles

UFC question/comment: During the survival survey for past Trees for Neighborhoods trees, when trees were dead, did the property become available to plant?

Answer: when trees showed up as 'not there' it could be for several reasons: they didn't get planted; they were planted in a different location (back yard) or were given to someone else (maybe outside Seattle).

UFC question/comment: what criteria does the program use to select Tree Ambassadors?

Answer: anyone who applies and shows interest in participating.

UFC question/comment: Really appreciate seeing the numbers. It would be good to see how the 2015 numbers stack up compared to past years numbers.

UFC question/comment: has there any more work around how to make that program work for renters?

Answer: it's something they have been thinking about. They do track renters vs. owners. Would really like to find ways to help renters participate in the program. The challenge is that there is more turnover with renters and need the approval of the owner.

UFC question/comment: an area to look at is to partner up with other departments to send watering reminders. Ingraham HS trees were not watered and died over the summer.

Answer: is open to working with other departments. SDOT and SCL did send out reminders to people that planted trees in an effort to support new trees during the summer.

UFC question/comment: how many full time staff do you have?

Answer: 2 full-time and one intern.

UFC question/comment: what would be the reasoning to ask for another FTE? The additional staff time would be allocated to volunteer engagement.

Answer: over \$100K with overhead

UFC question/comment: are all your volunteers adults or are there some volunteers of high school age?

Answer: Some students filling out community hours are engaged. Need more staff time to oversee and organize volunteers. We are not lacking volunteers.

UFC question/comment: another thing that would be good to capture would be some of those good stories about lessons learned.

UFSP RSJI toolkit

Sandra presented the Racial Equity Toolkit that OSE applied to the UFSP update process in 2015.

Department/Office: Office of Sustainability and Environment

Name of policy, program, etc. analyzed: Outreach and engagement for the 2017 Urban Forest Stewardship Plan update

Names and titles of key staff that led this RET process:

Angela Bartlett – Energy Benchmarking team

Michelle Caulfield – Deputy Director

Sara Cubillos – Equity and Environment Initiative Advisor

Pam Emerson – Green Stormwater Infrastructure Advisor

Sandra Pinto de Bader – Urban Forestry Policy Advisor

Dates of RET process (e.g., 8/2015 – 10/2015):

9/2015 – 12/2015

Please respond to the following questions on a separate document (no more than two pages).

Please include this page as the cover sheet along with your response.

1. List the racial equity outcome(s) that you set in Step 1 of the RET process. (Max 300 characters)

Outreach and engagement efforts around the Urban Forest Stewardship Plan (UFSP) update intentionally engage people of color, immigrant, refugee, and low income populations to participate in the process, provide input, help shape policies, strategies, and actions in support of the urban forest.

NOTE: The following are big-picture program outcomes we don't want to lose track of:

2. Everyone has access to information about how trees benefit their lives as well as the tools and resources to support their efforts to take care of trees.
3. Urban forest services and benefits are equitably distributed throughout Seattle.
4. City of Seattle investments to plant and maintain 'public' trees are equitably distributed.
5. WMBE businesses have the opportunity to participate in City-run maintenance/care associated with Seattle's urban forest.

2. Which stakeholders (groups and/or key individuals) did you engage in this RET? In what ways did you engage them? (Max 600 characters)

An OSE interdisciplinary team representing urban forestry, green stormwater infrastructure, energy benchmarking and the Equity and Environment Initiative partnered up with the Seattle reLeaf Program Manager to work on this RET.

3. Please describe up to five key benefits and/or burdens for people of color of this policy, program, project, or other decision, which the RET process helped you to identify or confirm. (Max 300 characters each)

Benefits:

- Increased property value (benefiting property owners)
- Improved air quality and associated respiratory outcomes
- Stress reduction and overall well-being
- Reduced heat island effect and associated heat-related illness
- Opportunity to create jobs and economic development related to tree maintenance and/or tree preservation

Burdens:

- Increased property value (impacting renters)
- Tree maintenance (leaf raking, watering, pruning)
- Competing uses: solar access, daylight access, perceived housing conflicts, garden space
- Risk of trees falling or limbs falling (risk of property damage and power outages)
- Sidewalk heaving (safety)

4. Please describe up to five key actions – things that you will do differently or begin to do now – of this policy, program, project, or other decision, which will increase opportunity and/or minimize harm for people of color. (Max 300 characters each)

There wasn't a robust O/E process to gather input from target populations in the last UFSP update. Without inclusive O/E the City is not hearing from people of color, immigrant, refugee, and low income populations and is creating policies that may not address the real needs of those communities.

1. The updated Urban Forest Stewardship Plan specifically addresses equity issues and recommends equity actions based on the research and engagement done through the update process.
2. Move from an outreach to an inclusive engagement process to learn of opportunities to better serve historically underrepresented communities. Engaging the community with an RSJI lens will inform policies and strategies in the updated plan.

3. Include dedicated funding to create and implement an outreach and engagement plan/strategy. Include focus groups as a means to engage target populations.
4. Determine whether translation and interpretation services will be needed to effectively involve underrepresented communities in the plan update process and provide opportunities for target populations to provide input, help shape policies, strategies, and actions in support of the urban forest.
5. Increase access to information for target populations about how trees benefit their lives as well as the tools and resources to support their efforts to take care of trees. Identify data gaps and find ways to acquire it.

5. How will leadership ensure implementation of the actions described in question 4? (Max 800 characters)

OSE will lead the UFSP update and will work with the Urban Forest IDT to ensure that the key actions identified as part of this RET are applied.

6. How have/will you report back to your stakeholders? (This includes the people who were directly engaged in this RET process, those who will be affected by decisions made, and other departments or divisions impacted by the RET findings and the actions described in question 4.) (Max 800 characters)

OSE will apply this RET to the next UFSP update and will partner with the Equity and Environment Initiative Community Partners Steering Committee, district councils, faith-based organizations, and ethnic and social services organizations in order to engage people of color, immigrant, refugee, and low income populations during the 2017 UFSP update process.

The team will engage NGOs focused on trees and urban forestry, such as Forterra, Earthcorps, Nature Consortium, Friends of Parks, Parks Foundation, Got Green, Puget Sound Sage and do focus groups with Seattle Housing Authority and other affordable housing providers as a way to engage low income communities.

As part of the plan update process, we will report progress on application of this RET to all stakeholders and include an equity section in the updated plan summarizing what we learned and make specific RSJI recommendations.

7. What additional racial equity issues did this RET reveal? Consider how these unresolved issues present opportunities for structural transformation (i.e. working across departments, and with other institutions and sectors to achieve racial equity). (Max 800 characters)

Perceived gentrification is an unintended consequence of tree planting and maintenance efforts by the City. Street and yard trees may increase property values, leading to higher taxes and may result in displacement – especially for renters. Engaging with non-profit partners and other City departments, such as the Office of Policy and Community Development, Seattle Housing Authority can provide opportunities to explore pathways to remove institutionalized racism.

Leif mentioned that Boston had a tree planting effort in 2017 with race and social justice principles approaching trees from a different social perspective.

UFC question/comment: Wonder how other programs are dealing with these issues. And find a way to partner up. Maybe see how the Comp Plan addresses it. If the community recognizes the value of an improvement (i.e. sidewalks) they might be more willing to accept the impacts (gentrification).

The Commission thought it would be a good idea to involve Seattle Housing Authority and would be interested in re-visiting this topic.

Draft 2015 Annual Report transmittal letter – review and possible vote

The Commission reviewed the letter.

ACTION: A motion to approve the letter as written was made, seconded, and approved.

MIMP recommendation – discussion and possible vote

Tom clarified the intent of the proposed insertions. The Commission discussed the letter.

Consider applying more commentary to some of these changes. The next iteration of the letter will be discussed at the March 9 meeting.

Public comment

None

New business and announcements

Sandra updated the UFC on the acquisition of Lidar data for the canopy cover assessment.

Adjourn

Public input:

Seattle, February 10th, 2016

To: Mr. Jesús Aguirre, Superintendent of Seattle Parks and Recreation Department

From: A. G. Voorhoeve, Carkeek Park volunteer

Re: Serious concerns about how much longer the Red alder/Bigleaf maple forests in Carkeek Park will last (see photo below)

CC: Many stakeholders in Seattle Urban Forestry (by email)



Collapsing forest on the steep slopes of Piper's Creek, Carkeek Park

Dear Mr. Aguirre,

My name is Lex Voorhoeve; I have been a forest steward volunteer in Carkeek Park since 1998. You may get information about me from Christopher Williams, Michael Yadrick (Urban Forestry), Andrea Mojzak (Green Seattle Partnership), and Loren McElvain, GSP Forest Steward in Carkeek Park.

What prompted me in 1998 to start volunteering was finding a big uprooted Red alder tree blocking Piper's creek trail. Being a forester by training I recognized the process that was going on: this forest is maturing and gradually "falling to pieces". Something might have to be done about this, and perhaps I could help.

Over the past 18 years I have observed this process accelerating, the forest becoming more and more "pockmarked"; the about 100 acres big forest is now \pm 85 years old, over-mature, and I expect that it will collapse altogether in the near future, possibly within 20 years.

When the steep slopes of the Piper's creek ravine become deforested, you will be faced with a few unpleasant problems:

- * The whole area is an environmentally critical area, subject to a nightmare of rules and restrictions;
- * Minor landslides occur occasionally, but a major landslide may occur also, affecting housing along the rim of the ravine, especially the houses close to the edge along 8th Ave. NW;
- * Erosion, already ever-present partly thanks to the ubiquitous presence of Mountain Beavers, will increase – much to the benefit of the beach, which has tripled in size over the last 20 years, but that is not what we are aiming at;
- * An open area of dozens of acres inevitably will be invaded by exotic species like Blackberry, Morning glory, and others;



Slope covered with Morning glory and Blackberry; Morning glory will win. Imagine this "urban nature" over dozens of acres – not fun.

* Finally: planting a new coniferous forest immediately after collapse is not really a viable option, because it does not create the needed short-term dense forest canopy needed to minimize erosion

and/or landslides, it is extremely expensive, it takes forever, and does not create the diversity that is expected from an urban forest.

Of course prevention is better than repairing. Forest restoration has been going on in Carkeek Park since the middle nine-ties, with disappointing results. Since 2005 this work has been channeled through the Green Seattle Partnership (GSP). Work is mostly executed by a group of regular volunteers, called the WEWOS, with occasional help from Earthcorps work parties and Park's Natural Areas crew. However, neither GSP nor the WEWO group is equipped, or even has the experience, to deal with deforestation and subsequent restoration of larger areas within a very short time frame. There is presently no pro-active planning for disaster control, and it is not the task of GSP or the WEWO group to face this challenge.

In 2013 Seattle Parks acted on alarm signals from the WEWO group by ordering a study on the restoration of Red alder forests¹; however, the "Hanson report" from May 2014 does not address the mentioned issues resulting from a major deforestation. After presenting our concerns to the Urban Forestry Committee, October 14 (2015), I started to develop "CHIP", the Carkeek Hanson Implementation Project, with the support of the WEWO group and Carkeek Park Advisory Council. However, after talking over a draft of this project² with several stakeholders who would be involved with such a project, among others Margaret Glowacki (Seattle Department of Construction and Inspections), I have come to the conclusion that this is too big a project to be initiated and executed by me or the WEWO group. I was reaching too high.

So that is why I bring this to your attention: my core concern that the Carkeek Park Red alder/Bigleaf maple forest soon will collapse and that there are no plans to mitigate this concern.

Respectfully yours,

A.G. Voorhoeve

(206) 706 1009

ompa@w-link.net

Afterthought 1: if you ever wish to make a site visit and discuss these issues with the WEWO group, or talk this over with us and your staff members, please let us know.

Afterthought 2: In case a massive deforestation happens, top priority will be to create a dense interim forest canopy of fast growing species to mitigate erosion and landslides. A "Best management practice" for establishing such an interim forest needs to be developed as soon as possible.

¹ Accelerating conifer regeneration in Seattle Parks (Hanson report, May 2014)

² Draft available on request