

SEATTLE URBAN FORESTRY COMMISSION

Weston Brinkley (Position #3 – University), Chair • Sandra Whiting (Position #2 – Urban Ecologist) Vice-Chair
Steve Zemke (Position #1 – Wildlife Biologist) • Sarah Rehder (Position #4 – Hydrologist)
Stuart Niven (Position #5 – Arborist – ISA) • Michael Walton (Position #6 – Landscape Architect – ISA)
Joshua Morris (Position #7 – NGO) • Andrew Zellers (Position #8 – Development)
Craig Johnson (Position #9 – Economist) • Bonnie Lei (Position #10 – Get Engaged)
Whit Bouton (Position #11 – Environmental Justice) • Jessica Jones (Position #12 – Public Health)
Shari Selch (Position #13 – Community/Neighborhood)

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 8, 2019

Meeting Notes

Seattle Municipal Tower, Room 1940 (19th floor)
700 5th Avenue, Seattle

Attending

Commissioners

Weston Brinkley – Chair
Sandra Whiting – Vice-Chair
Whit Bouton
Craig Johnson
Jessica Jones
Bonnie Lei
Josh Morris
Stuart Niven
Sarah Rehder
Shari Selch
Michael Walton
Steve Zemke

Staff

Sandra Pinto de Bader - OSE
Lisa Rutzick - SDCI

Guests

Elijah Selch

Public

Michael Oxman

Absent- Excused

Andrew Zellers

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

Weston called the meeting to order.

Public comment

Michael Oxman – He is an arborist. Wants to elaborate on his comments from last week. He was looking at 2007 UFMP. It states that we need to know about the tree resource and the capacity to deal with the resource. The departmental presentations are not in a consistent format. Knowing our process and your goals in Design Review, doesn't help the UFC understand what they are doing. On May 15, 2009 the City Auditor report identified several issues with the way the City manages urban trees. He recommended the UFC read the report.

Steve Zemke mentioned that the UF Symposium will be held on May 21.

Design Review Program briefing

Lisa Rutzick – Manages the Design Review Program. Has been with the department for 18 years and has been managing the program for 6 years.

The Design Review program was established in 1994 with three primary objectives:

- Encourage better design and site planning
- Provide flexibility in the application of development standards
- Improve communication and participation among developers, neighbor, and the City early in the design and siting of new development.

Design review doesn't apply to Single Family zones. 8,000 sq ft (gross floor area of proposed building) is the threshold. Have 8 different districts. Each board has 5 members representing the following interests:

- Community
- Design
- Development
- Residential
- Business/Landscape

Design guidelines are used:

- As code authority by the Design Review Program
- By Design Review Boards and City staff to judge the merits of proposed projects
- To inform the development of 23 sets of supplemental guidelines known as the Neighborhood Design Guidelines (focus on urban villages)
- Apply to private property and the intersection with the ROW.

Seattle's Design Guidelines include:

- Citywide – updated in 2014
- Downtown
- Neighborhood-specific

The design areas are grouped into the following categories:

- Context and site
 - o CS1 natural systems & site features
 - o CS2 urban pattern and form
 - o CS3 architectural context and character
- Public life
 - o PL1 open space concept
 - o PL2 walkability
 - o PL3 street level interaction
 - o PL4 active transportation
- Design concept
 - o DC1 project uses and activities
 - o DC2 architectural concept
 - o DC3 open space concept
 - o DC4 materials

The UFC provided input during the 2014 update.

Design Review departures (SMC 23.41.012)

Departures may be granted from Land Use Code standards or requirements, except for:

- Floor area ratio (FAR)
- Height
- Parking
- See code for complete list

The Board makes a determination about whether a requested departure may be allowed if an application demonstrates that the design would result in a development that better meets the intent of adopted design guidelines.

The early design guideline phase happens before the Master Use Permit application to provide feedback to applicants before they apply for a permit. This is a required process.

Meetings are held in the evenings in the neighborhoods. They discuss two projects per meeting. The applicant presents the project, the public provides comment, the board discusses and provides guidance to applicant team.

There are three types of design review:

1. Full design review - design review board input at public meeting, per the threshold table.
2. Administrative Design Review – staff review (optional for projects under the SEPA thresholds and for certain projects containing Small Efficiency Dwelling Units or SEDUs).
3. Streamlined Design Review – staff review (required for two or more townhouses, developed in 2011 when the multifamily code was updated and began to distinguish between townhouse and row house housing typologies, and for certain projects containing SEDUs).

Public outreach by the applicant takes place before the process begin so the public can communicate directly with the project time in advance of a permit application. Outreach has to take place in person, in writing and online. Department of Neighborhoods provides resources to applicants in terms of community groups, they have a blog and you can sign up to receive notices.

SDCI's public notice is a mailer that covers 300 ft around the proposed project.

NOTE: Meeting notes are not meant to capture the whole conversation. For more details, specifically for Q and A, refer to the digital recording of the meeting at:

<http://www.seattle.gov/urbanforestrycommission/meetingdocs.htm>

Exceptional trees and design review:

- Must identify Exceptional Trees on site during the Early Design Guidance phase.
- Required to conduct Streamlined Design Review if not otherwise subject to Design Review and are proposing to remove an Exceptional Tree.
- For projects in Highrise and Downtown zones (including South Lake Union) removal of Exceptional Trees is not required to go through design review.
- In 209, the Hearing Examiner clarified that if a project is going through full (Design Review Board) review, the design review process shall also consider the Exceptional Tree.

SMC 25.11.80 states that SDCI can permit removal of Exceptional trees when design review is considered, and the applicant demonstrated that “protecting the tree by avoiding development in the tree protection area could not be achieved through the development standard adjustments... or the departures... a

reduction in the parking requirements.... And/or a reduction in the standards of [parking space dimensions, maneuverability, driveways, curb cuts, etc.]”

Therefore, the applicant needs to show an alternate design that shows:

1. Critical Tree Protection zone (roots that need to be protected in order to allow the tree to live).
2. Minimized parking and vehicular access to save Exceptional Trees.
3. Modified setbacks, structure width, façade height, and other development standards to save the Exceptional Tree.
4. A comparison of building area for the proposed design and the alternate design (square feet, potential number of units, etc.)

When an Exceptional Tree is identified and proposed for removal, the Design Review Board needs to recommend to SDCI on of two things:

1. The proposed design with the tree removed meets the Design Review Guidelines better than a proposal that includes the tree, OR
2. The alternate design with the tree retained meets the design Review Guidelines better than the proposed design without the tree.

The Commission debriefed what they learned from the presentation.

Seattle City Light briefing – to be re-scheduled

Tree regulations discussion continues – minimum canopy cover per parcel discussion - to be re-scheduled

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UFC engagement

They had two meetings to discuss current UFC outreach: public comment, listen to posted recording, emails to UFC, and UFC email list.

Ways to improve current outreach:

- Allow for people to Skype in or participate as a webinar and have people provide comments.
- Other locations to post the recordings, i.e. SoundCloud
- Email list – UF commissioners probably don’t read every email – would be great to have it in a single
 - o Sarah finds it helpful to have email separate the conversation thread because that way she can understand the context. Maybe use a system like Reddit to group things automatically. Use a system to help aggregate input (ACTION: research what could be allowed).
- Engage with social media – what are the rules for Boards and Commissions?

Need to actively gather different perspectives than those currently being presented. May-June could be a time for the UFC to do research about identifying three different community groups to have a meeting with them and hear their concerns. Opportunity to collaborate with the Community Engagement Commission and others that are working on getting more diversity in our voices.

Steve said it could be useful to put together a presentation to share with different groups.

Whit stressed that authentic engagement happens when an open conversation and create a community event to provide an opportunity to discuss how the UFC’s recommendations and interest might align with interests that community has.

Explore possibility of having funding to support evening meetings with food and child care.
Have after-hours meetings.
Producing a one-pager with FAQ for email responses.
Find a system that would send automatic emails to the right departments.

The UFC further discussed the ideas presented by Whit and Bonnie.

Chair actions:

- Selecting groups to engage with
- Sandra: what's possible for software, access, forms, social media policy for Boards and Commissions
- What's possible around meeting time, place and format
- How to engage with the UFMP update public comment
- One-pager, what does the UFC do and FAQ draft will be done by Whit
- Put T4S contact info in resources area of the website

Public comment

Michael Oxman –

1. CM Bagshaw asked what's the work on the executive order. Lack of tree inventory
2. ADU EIS is being appealed
3. MHA appeal is underway
4. Sound Transit tree removal
5. Tree Ordinance – have a public meeting where you actually interact with the public
6. Where is the Executive Order work at?
7. Tree triage code compliance complaints
8. Sandra to invite Open Space Coalition to present to the UFC

New Business

None

Adjourn

Public input:

None