



Tree Protections Update and Racial Equity

Photo by John Skelton



Seattle Department of
Construction & Inspections

Urban Forestry Commission
Charlie Spear | November 18, 2020

SDCI PURPOSE AND VALUES

Our Purpose

Helping people build a safe, livable, and inclusive Seattle.

Our Values

- Equity
- Respect
- Quality
- Integrity
- Service

TODAY'S PRESENTATION

- Tree protection regulation update
- Racial equity toolkit process
- Racial equity outcomes
- Outreach efforts
- What we've learned
- Issues to explore
- Next steps
- Urban Forest Management Plan update open for public input
- Request

TREE PROTECTIONS UPDATE

Proposals include ...

- Requiring permits for tree removal on private property
- Requiring mitigation for tree removal, which can be done by:
 - planting new trees on site
 - making a payment in lieu if tree planting onsite is not possible or desirable
- Setting new limits on how many significant trees can be removed
- Requiring tree service providers to sign an acknowledgement that they know the City's tree protection requirements

RACIAL EQUITY TOOLKIT PROCESS

Identify desired outcomes

Involve stakeholders and analyze data

Determine benefit and/or burden

Advance opportunity and reduce harm

Evaluate, be accountable, report back



RACIAL EQUITY OUTCOMES

- Ensure urban forestry benefits and responsibilities are shared fairly across communities, particularly BIPOC (black, indigenous and people of color) communities.
- Reduce the disproportionate negative impacts to BIPOC communities due to having fewer trees.
- Specifically, reduce the burdens of tree regulations implementation and enforcement on BIPOC communities.

OUTREACH EFFORTS WE CAN LEVERAGE

- Significant work done in 2018-2020 for Urban Forestry Management Plan Update
- Other sources
 - 2016 Tree Canopy Assessment
 - Equity and Environment Agenda
 - Duwamish Action Plan
- Possible deficiency in these sources: outreach to renters

EXAMPLES OF WHAT WE HAVE LEARNED

- BIPOC communities tend to have lower tree canopy (20% vs. 28%)
- Trees are important to BIPOC communities, and they want to partner with the City to increase canopy cover in their communities.
- They have concerns and fears about regulations and remedies, including:
 - Expense of tree planting and maintenance
 - Possible contribution to reduced housing supply
 - Possible contribution to gentrification and displacement
- Lack of trust in government can influence participation and views about regulations.
- White, affluent communities can better afford tree maintenance, and have greater influence over City policies.

SOME ISSUES TO EXPLORE

- The complexity of private property regulations, requiring a strong engagement effort in order to elicit informed input from a variety of stakeholders.
- The need to balance other priorities (i.e. – high rents, shortage of affordable housing, budget pressures from pandemic and recession) with these proposals for increased tree protections on private property
- Possible disproportionate impact of regulations on BIPOC communities due to factors such as:
 - language barriers
 - access to information
 - distrust of government
 - disparities in financial resources

NEXT STEPS IN RACIAL EQUITY TOOLKIT

- Continue reaching out and gathering data
 - Renters' Commission
 - Partner with Community Liaisons
 - Internal stakeholders
- Draft Racial Equity Toolkit
 - Benefits, burdens
 - Actions to advance opportunity and minimize harm
- Review draft with stakeholders and affected communities
- Start implementing actions and evaluating

REQUESTS AND QUESTIONS FOR YOU

- Any feedback, guidance or ideas you might have to offer right now or any time!
- Review Racial Equity Toolkit draft and provide feedback when the time comes

QUESTIONS?

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