



**SEATTLE URBAN FORESTRY COMMISSION**

**Weston Brinkley** (Position #3 – University), Chair • **Sarah Rehder** (Position #4 – Hydrologist), Vice-chair  
**Julia Michalak** (Position #1 – Wildlife Biologist) • **Elby Jones** (Position #2 – Urban Ecologist - ISA)  
**Stuart Niven** (Position #5 – Arborist – ISA) • **Michael Walton** (Position #6 – Landscape Architect – ISA)  
**Joshua Morris** (Position #7 – NGO) • **Blake Voorhees** (Position #9 – Realtor)  
**Elena Arakaki** (Position #10 – Get Engaged) • **Jessica Hernandez** (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*

**Meeting notes**

August 4, 2021, 3:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.  
Via Webex call  
(206) 207-1700  
Meeting number: 1461 23 6164  
Meeting password: 1234

*In-person meetings are not being held at this time due to the pandemic. Meeting participation is limited to access by joining the meeting through a computer or telephone conference line.*

**Attending**

Commissioners

Weston Brinkley – Chair  
Sarah Rehder - Vice-Chair  
Jessica Hernandez  
Julia Michalak  
David Moehring  
Josh Morris  
Stuart Niven  
Shari Selch  
Blake Voorhees  
Michael Walton  
Jessica Jones  
Elby Jones

Staff

Patti Bakker – OSE

Guests

Toby Thaler – CM Pedersen’s Office  
Garden Cycles crew

Absent- Excused

Elena Arakaki

Public

Steve Zemke  
Anna Pedroso

**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 at 3:04 and provided a land acknowledgement.

**Public comment:**

- Steve Zemke commented regarding the SHA letter and project; the tier categories don't look at whether trees are exceptional. Having a different system is problematic; urges the UFC to consider this in their recommendations.
- Art Pedersen sent a letter to be included in comments; this letter is included in the public input section at the bottom of these meeting notes.

**Chair, Committees, and Coordinator report:**

Coordinator report: Patti reported updates on the work on the SLI, the UFMP and the tree regulations outreach, and answered some follow up questions from Weston.

Sarah shared news with the Commission that she will be leaving her Seattle-based job in September. Since she also doesn't live in Seattle now, she will need to step down from her Commission position and we will need to replace her as vice-chair and also recruit a replacement for her Hydrologist position.

Patti called for nominations for Vice-Chair to be emailed to her before next week's meeting so that the Commission can elect a new Vice-Chair at the meeting. There was discussion to clarify what the role of the Vice-Chair is.

**Approval of July 7 and July 14 meeting notes**

**ACTION: A motion to approve the July 7 meeting notes as written and amended was made, seconded, and approved.**

**ACTION: A motion to approve the July 14 meeting notes as written and amended was made, seconded, and approved.**

**Yesler Terrace continued discussion and potential vote**

Commissioners discussed the draft letter and additional information still desired. There was discussion of the system for handling trees in this project, since it is different from how trees are handled in other projects.

Toby Thaler provided an update on the Council Bill for the Planned Action Ordinance. They did allow mitigation off-site because they couldn't do all the planting on site, so Council required plantings to be done close by. An amendment was agreed to that outlines three off-site location categories: within a quarter mile, on nearby SHA properties, and parts of the city that are deficit in trees. The Commission discussed further input on this project and additional information desired, and edited the letter accordingly.

**Action: A motion to adopt the letter as amended was made, seconded and approved.**

**Heat islands presentation letter and potential vote**

Weston outlined his draft letter and the Commission discussed overall tone and approach. Julia raised the idea of including in the letter planting plans and spatial analysis, a citywide analysis of whether the city could reach its goals if every department planted where they could and what they have funding for, acknowledging the significant costs of doing this kind of analysis. The Commission discussed how to incorporate this, as well as equity considerations in doing this kind of planning. The letter was edited based on Commissioner's input.

**Action: A motion to adopt the letter as amended was made, seconded and approved.**

**2021 Workplan review**

The Commission did not get to this item as time ran out.

**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>**

**Public comment:**

Steve Zemke commented that it was a good discussion on the heat island letter, good direction and recommendations. Also regarding the SLI, he commented in support of one department for tree regulations that is accountable. Good luck and best wishes to Sarah.

**Adjourn:** The meeting was adjourned at 5:04 PM.

**Meeting Chat:**

from Pedroso, Anna to everyone: 3:06 PM

My name is Anna Pedroso. Just a Seattle resident listening to the meeting. No public comment.. :-)

from Bakker, Patricia to everyone: 3:07 PM

Thanks, Anna - welcome!

from Jessica Hernandez to everyone: 3:14 PM

It is a little bit hard to hear Paty.

from Joshua Morris to everyone: 3:16 PM

Congrats, Sarah!

from Blake Voorhees to everyone: 3:16 PM

Congrats, Sarah!

from Joshua Morris to everyone: 3:16 PM

Orchard farmer?????

from Jessica Hernandez to everyone: 3:16 PM

Congratulations!

from Joshua Morris to everyone: 3:16 PM

Love it.

from Michael Walton to everyone: 3:16 PM

Congratulations Sarah!

from Julia Michalak to everyone: 3:17 PM

Congratulations Sarah!! Very exciting :)

from Jessica Hernandez to everyone: 3:19 PM

I am semi-new so what are the vice chair responsibilities?

from Sarah Rehder to everyone: 3:19 PM

Thanks everyone! I'm sorry to be leaving but am excited and scared with this next chapter.

from Sarah Rehder to everyone: 3:20 PM

Mostly it is fill in leading meetings when chair is not available.

from Jessica Hernandez to everyone: 3:20 PM

Thank you!

from Sarah Rehder to everyone: 3:21 PM

You can expand the role to learn and help more, but it is mostly back up chair

from Thaler, Toby to everyone: 3:33 PM

I thought I saw Stuart earlier.

from Thaler, Toby to everyone: 3:38 PM

I can explain CB if you ask.

from David Moehring to everyone: 3:43 PM

See the 20 minute committee meeting from July 28, 2021 <https://www.seattlechannel.org/>

(strating at 1hr 22 min) CB 120108: relating to redevelopment at the Yesler Terrace Master Planned Community

from David Moehring to everyone: 3:45 PM

Thank you, Toby!

from Thaler, Toby to everyone: 3:46 PM

Yesler Terrace Council Bill 120108 passed Monday, August 2 --

<http://seattle.legistar.com/LegislationDetail.aspx?ID=4992435&GUID=CA5156B6-70A4-46C9-A39C-A81F3660A034&Options=ID|Text|Attachments|&Search=yesler+terrace>

from Steve Zemke to everyone: 3:46 PM

SDCI has not in past reported figures on tree plantings. other city departments report tree plantings per quarter

from Thaler, Toby to everyone: 3:47 PM

Initial change to tree

from Thaler, Toby to everyone: 3:47 PM

Tree agreement, original: (22 pages)

<http://seattle.legistar.com/View.ashx?M=F&ID=9501267&GUID=B78BB14C-532E-4DC7-8123-17D30234CC50>

from Thaler, Toby to everyone: 3:48 PM

The adopted Pedersen (and Strauss) amendment:

<http://seattle.legistar.com/View.ashx?M=F&ID=9672925&GUID=655A07C2-247C-4A5C-8A60-A322922934F0>

from Thaler, Toby to everyone: 3:54 PM

Here's the text of amendment: If SDCI determines that there is inadequate space for tree planting within the 1,500 foot area surrounding the Planned Action Site, replacement trees may be planted on other existing SHA properties or in census tracts with tree canopy cover of 25 percent or less, according to the 2016 Seattle Tree Canopy Assessment (or successor tree canopy assessment). Payment-in-lieu of planting may only be used after SDCI has determined that SHA has exhausted all viable options within the Planned Action Site and off-site areas.

from David Moehring to everyone: 4:08 PM

Why is the UFC interested in Yesler Terrace and achieving canopy equity? "The UFC is very interested in equitable tree canopy across the city. The area of Yesler Terrace has a limited canopy of only 10 to 20 percent according to the Seattle 2016 LiDAR Canopy Cover Assessment (May 2017), which is far from the 2037 citywide goal of 30 percent." Thank you Toby.

from David Moehring to everyone: 4:13 PM

FYI (reminder) page 27 canopy cover map

<http://www.seattle.gov/Documents/Departments/Trees/Mangement/Canopy/2016SeattleLiDARCanopyCoverWebinarFINAL050817.pdf>

from David Moehring to everyone: 4:15 PM

FYI , as well... EEI ... environmental equity (Mayor Murray 2015)

<http://www.seattle.gov/Documents/Departments/Trees/Mangement/Canopy/Seattle2016CCAFinalReportFINAL.pdf> page 10

from Sarah Rehder to everyone: 4:25 PM

mental health

from David Moehring to everyone: 4:32 PM

Agree with the approach of the letter.

from Steve Zemke to everyone: 4:36 PM

I'm not aware of any action plan that relates to numbers of trees needed and dates for planting that addresses responding to the heat island effects Good idea Julia to recommend need for detailed planting program to address deficits.

from Steve Zemke to everyone: 4:38 PM

Previously suggested coordinating with city climate action programs to reach 30% citywide by 2030 instead of 2037.

from Steve Zemke to everyone: 4:40 PM

Agree Sarah, need a roadmap to deal with the climate crisis. and speed up increasing canopy particularly in areas with canopy deficit.

from Steve Zemke to everyone: 4:42 PM

Existing canopy goal was set in 2007. A lot has changed since then.

from Steve Zemke to everyone: 4:46 PM

Current Comprehensive Plan has actually 40% aspirational goal.

from Thaler, Toby to everyone: 4:51 PM

I need to sign off... thanks for your work.

from Weston to everyone: 4:51 PM

thanks Toby!

from David Moehring to everyone: 4:52 PM

Like the "Bigger and bolder" tree planting request. We are only planting about 1,000 street trees per year (and many of those fail within 3 years.) Some background on STREET trees planted by Seattle district should be in the record of UFC from Oct 26 2015... From: Burns, Emily

To: Pinto de Bader, Sandra

Subject: RE: New trees planted in 2014 by council district

Date: Monday, October 26, 2015 10:20 AM

Attachments: Trees by Council District 10292015.xlsx

2013-2014 Tree Benefits Map.pdf

"Hi Sandra,

Attached is the tree data by council district, including address and ownership. I've filtered the spreadsheet to remove Private and Park records." ... .. (table included) " Council District Count Tree plantings per Council district

between 1/1/2014 and 12/31/2014:

District 1 324 street trees planted

District 2 554

District 3 104

District 4 9

District 5 50

District 6 42

District 7 10" ...street trees planted. (Loss not included.)

from Steve Zemke to everyone: 4:55 PM

American Forestry Association thinks cities in western WA could reach 40% goals. We obviously have areas in the city significantly lacking canopy coverage.

from Steve Zemke to everyone: 4:58 PM

from Nature Conservancy - upcoming webinar on August 12 with the Northern Institute of Applied Climate Science (NIACS) focused on tree species and climate change impacts in the Puget Sound region! This is the third webinar in a series focused on the collaboration between The Nature Conservancy, American Forests, City Forest Credits, and Davey Resource Group to foster healthy urban forests in Central Puget Sound. This partnership is funded by the Washington State Department of Natural Resources.

In this upcoming webinar, you will hear from NIACS about the adaptability and vulnerability of different tree species related to expected climate impacts in the Central Puget Sound region as well about a new Climate Adaptive Tree Species Guide. There will be an opportunity following the webinar to provide feedback on the guide.

Register here for the webinar on August 12 at 1pm. The webinar will be recorded and shared with everyone who registers.

Please feel free to sh

from Sarah Rehder to everyone: 5:04 PM

thank you, Steve!

from Jessica Hernandez to everyone: 5:04 PM

Thank you all. Bye!

**Public input: (see next page and posted notes):**

**From:** Siegelbaum, Heidi <heidi.siegelbaum@wsu.edu>

**Sent:** Thursday, July 15, 2021 11:35 AM

**To:** Bakker, Patricia <Patricia.Bakker@seattle.gov>

**Cc:** Emery, Chanda <Chanda.Emery@Seattle.gov>; Pedersen, Alex <Alex.Pedersen@seattle.gov>; Thaler, Toby <Toby.Thaler@seattle.gov>

**Subject:** For your records- localized heat island

[https://kingcounty.gov/elected/executive/constantine/news/release/2021/June/23-heat-mapping-results.aspx?utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_source=govdelivery](https://kingcounty.gov/elected/executive/constantine/news/release/2021/June/23-heat-mapping-results.aspx?utm_medium=email&utm_source=govdelivery)

FYI, please add this to the public record related to the update about the tree ordinance.

All the best,

Heidi Siegelbaum

Stormwater Strategic Initiative Lead

Washington Stormwater Center at Washington State University

[Heidi.Siegelbaum@wsu.edu](mailto:Heidi.Siegelbaum@wsu.edu)

(253) 445-4502

Home office: (206) 784-4265

<https://wastormwatercenter.org>

<https://pugetsoundestuary.wa.gov>

**From:** Lynn Ferguson <lynnferguson65@comcast.net>

**Sent:** Friday, July 16, 2021 3:26 PM

**To:** Bakker, Patricia <Patricia.Bakker@seattle.gov>

**Subject:** Save our Trees!

Urban Forestry Commission Coordinator Patti Bakker,

It's time to end the delay by the Seattle Department of Construction and Inspections (SDCI) on presenting the Seattle City Council with an updated draft Tree and Urban Forest Protection Ordinance. Over the last 12 years, the City Council has repeatedly asked SDCI for an updated workable and effective ordinance

draft to consider and it is obvious SDCI is not responding as requested. In its recent Resolution 31902, the Council gave specific issues for SDCI to address.

If SDCI cannot respond in a timely manner, please remove tree and urban forestry protection from their Department. As the City Auditor proposed in 2009, transfer tree and urban forestry oversight and authority to the Office of Sustainability and the Environment. SDCI has a conflict of interest in tree oversight – their priority mission has been to help developers build, not protect trees. Years of inaction on effective oversight and protection of trees by SDCI demands that a separate entity like OSE take over the city's responsibility to protect and enhance our urban forest.

Seattle's trees and urban forest are vital to keeping our city healthy and livable. Trees and the urban forest comprise a vital green infrastructure. Trees reduce air pollution, storm water runoff and climate impacts like heat island effects, while providing essential habitat for birds and other wildlife. They are important for the physical and mental health of our residents.

Seattle's rapid growth and an outdated tree ordinance are reducing these beneficial effects as trees are removed and not replaced. It is urgent to act now to stop this continued loss of trees, particularly large mature trees and tree groves. It is important to promote environmental equity as trees are replaced.

Please update Seattle's Tree Protection Ordinance as recommended in the latest draft by the Seattle Urban Forestry Commission.

Do not cut our large trees to be replaced with more little ones. They are not the same. Enforce the rules we have as well. I support the ideas below too. Some Northwesterners consider trees weeds because they grow so easily here. I remember seeing a bumper sticker RUN TREE RUN on the logger who was taking the trees for the UW housing expansion at Radford Ct.....sad comment.

1. Expand the existing Tree Removal and Replacement Permit Program, including 2-week public notice and posting on-site, as used by the Seattle Department of Transportation (SDOT) – to cover all Significant Trees (6" and larger diameter at breast height (DBH)) on private property in all land use zones, both during development and outside development.
2. Require the replacement of all Significant Trees removed with trees that in 25 years will reach equivalent canopy volume – either on site or pay a replacement fee into a City Tree Replacement and Preservation Fund. Allow the Fund to also accept fines, donations, grants and set up easements.
3. Retain current protections for Exceptional Trees and reduce the upper threshold for Exceptional Trees to 24" DBH, protect tree groves and prohibit Significant Trees being removed on undeveloped lots.
4. Allow removal of no more than 2 Significant non-Exceptional Trees in 3 years per lot outside development
5. Establish one citywide database for applying for Tree Removal and Replacement Permits and to track changes in the tree canopy.

6. Post online all permit requests and permit approvals for public viewing.
7. Expand SDOT's existing tree service provider's registration and certification to register all Tree Service Providers (arborists) working on trees in Seattle.
8. Provide adequate funding in the budget to implement and enforce the updated ordinance.

Lynn Ferguson

[lynnferguson65@comcast.net](mailto:lynnferguson65@comcast.net)

6422 NE 60th St.

Seattle, Washington 98115

**From:** Lael White <info@email.actionnetwork.org>

**Sent:** Sunday, July 25, 2021 6:38 PM

**To:** Bakker, Patricia <Patricia.Bakker@seattle.gov>

**Subject:** Save our Trees!

**CAUTION: External Email**

Urban Forestry Commission Coordinator Patti Bakker,

It's time to end the delay by the Seattle Department of Construction and Inspections (SDCI) on presenting the Seattle City Council with an updated draft Tree and Urban Forest Protection Ordinance. Over the last 12 years, the City Council has repeatedly asked SDCI for an updated workable and effective ordinance draft to consider and it is obvious SDCI is not responding as requested. In its recent Resolution 31902, the Council gave specific issues for SDCI to address.

If SDCI cannot respond in a timely manner, please remove tree and urban forestry protection from their Department. As the City Auditor proposed in 2009, transfer tree and urban forestry oversight and authority to the Office of Sustainability and the Environment. SDCI has a conflict of interest in tree oversight – their priority mission has been to help developers build, not protect trees. Years of inaction on effective oversight and protection of trees by SDCI demands that a separate entity like OSE take over the city's responsibility to protect and enhance our urban forest.

Seattle's trees and urban forest are vital to keeping our city healthy and livable. Trees and the urban forest comprise a vital green infrastructure. Trees reduce air pollution, storm water runoff and climate impacts like heat island effects, while providing essential habitat for birds and other wildlife. They are important for the physical and mental health of our residents.

Seattle's rapid growth and an outdated tree ordinance are reducing these beneficial effects as trees are removed and not replaced. It is urgent to act now to stop this continued loss of trees, particularly large mature trees and tree groves. It is important to promote environmental equity as trees are replaced.



Please update Seattle's Tree Protection Ordinance as recommended in the latest draft by the Seattle Urban Forestry Commission.

Here are the key provisions that need to be in the updated tree ordinance:

1. Expand the existing Tree Removal and Replacement Permit Program, including 2-week public notice and posting on-site, as used by the Seattle Department of Transportation (SDOT) – to cover all Significant Trees (6" and larger diameter at breast height (DBH)) on private property in all land use zones, both during development and outside development.
2. Require the replacement of all Significant Trees removed with trees that in 25 years will reach equivalent canopy volume – either on site or pay a replacement fee into a City Tree Replacement and Preservation Fund. Allow the Fund to also accept fines, donations, grants and set up easements.
3. Retain current protections for Exceptional Trees and reduce the upper threshold for Exceptional Trees to 24" DBH, protect tree groves and prohibit Significant Trees being removed on undeveloped lots.
4. Allow removal of no more than 2 Significant non-Exceptional Trees in 3 years per lot outside development
5. Establish one citywide database for applying for Tree Removal and Replacement Permits and to track changes in the tree canopy.
6. Post online all permit requests and permit approvals for public viewing.
7. Expand SDOT's existing tree service provider's registration and certification to register all Tree Service Providers (arborists) working on trees in Seattle.
8. Provide adequate funding in the budget to implement and enforce the updated ordinance.

Lael White

[laelcwhite@gmail.com](mailto:laelcwhite@gmail.com)

6707 230th Street SW

Mountlake Terrace, Washington 98043

**From:** Jayn Foy <info@email.actionnetwork.org>

**Sent:** Wednesday, July 28, 2021 9:00 AM

**To:** Bakker, Patricia <Patricia.Bakker@seattle.gov>

**Subject:** End the delay! Adopt, with amendments, SDCI's Director's Rule 13-2020

**CAUTION: External Email**

Urban Forestry Commission Coordinator Patti Bakker,

As recent record temperatures have demonstrated, the climate crisis is real. Trees are a buffer to help reduce extreme temperature impacts in urban areas.

Please adopt, with the amendments recommended by the Seattle Urban Forestry Commission, SDCI's

Director's Rule 13-2020 (Designation of Exceptional and Significant Trees, Tree Protection, Retention, and Tree Removal during land division, including tree service provider requirements).

Seattle must move forward now, without the delay urged by some, in adopting this updated Director's Rule with the amendments proposed below. This process of increasing protection for our urban forest was first proposed by the Seattle City Council 12 years ago and is long overdue.

The following updates as proposed in the draft Director's Rule are great steps forward:

- Reducing the upper threshold on exceptional trees to 24 inches in diameter at standard height (DSH) from 30 inches
- Designating trees 6 inches DSH and larger as protected trees, starting in the platting and short platting process
- Requiring Tree Care Providers to register with the City as the Seattle Dept. of Transportation already requires
- Continuing protection of tree groves as exceptional trees, even if a tree is removed from the grove
- Making clear that all exceptional trees removed during development must be replaced per SMC 25.11.090
- Tightening tree removal requirements for exceptional trees as hazard trees

The following changes to the draft Director's Rule are needed:

- Change Subject Title to remove words "land division" and replace with "Development"
- PURPOSE AND BACKGROUND. add "SMC 23 requires that all trees 6 inches DSH and larger must be indicated on all site plans throughout the platting and sub-platting process, and that projects must be designed to maximize the retention of existing trees. This requirement continues throughout any subsequent development on all lots in all zones in the city."
- SECTION 1. Reduce the number of trees and sizes required to be a tree grove. Kirkland, Woodinville, and Duvall all define a tree grove as "a group of 3 or more significant trees with overlapping or touching crowns." Include street trees in groves.
- Add "Significant trees may become exceptional as they grow in size. They are future replacements in the urban forest for exceptional trees when they die. Development projects must be designed to maximize the retention of both exceptional and significant trees to maintain a diversity of tree species and ages."
- Add "All replacement trees regardless of size are protected trees and can't be removed."
- SECTION 2. Change the heading to "TREE PROTECTION". Remove references to "Exceptional Trees" only and change to "Trees". e.g., change "Exceptional Tree Protection Areas" to "Tree Protection Areas".
- SECTION 4. Add "The Director shall have the authority to allow replacement trees on both public and private property to meet the goals and objectives of race and social justice under Seattle's Equity and Environment Initiative."
- Under SMC 25.11.090 the Director has the authority to require "one or more trees" to be planted as replacement trees for removed exceptional trees during development. The number of trees required

should increase with the size of the tree removed, with a goal to achieve equivalent canopy area and volume in 25 years. Any in-lieu fee must also rise as the size of the removed tree increases. The city can not wait 80 years to replace an 80-year-old western red cedar tree and expect to maintain its canopy goals as large exceptional trees are removed during development.

- SECTION 5. SEPA requirements under SMC 25.05.675 N are for protecting special habitats and need to be considered at the beginning of the development process. The language of this SEPA code section should be included in the Director's Rule to be certain that the code is complied with.
- SECTION 6. SDCI should adopt SDOT's registration process and requirements to assist Tree Care Providers in complying with city code and regulations. Reduce the number of citations that will remove a Tree Care Provider from being registered with the city to no more than 2 per year. Require annual registration same as Seattle business licenses require. Require that Tree Care Provider companies have a WA State contractor's license to ensure they have workers' compensation. Require they have a certificate of insurance that lists the city as an additional insured so the city cannot be sued. Require that all jobs either have a certified arborist on the work site or that they have visited the site and officially sign off on the specific work being done.

Thank you for protecting our urban forest.

Jayn Foy

[jaynfoy@gmail.com](mailto:jaynfoy@gmail.com)

3302 S. Charles St.

Seattle, Washington 98144

Letter from Art Pedersen to the UFC:

Comments to UFC August 1, 2021

Regarding the UFC Draft Review Comments on Seattle's Overall Forestry Management SLI MO 001-A-002.

Dear Commissioners:

The draft recommendation letter discussed at the July 7 Commission meeting on page two recommends "that a single (non-SDCI) entity with clear authority and accountability, particularly when it comes to trees on private property" would improve the wanting condition of urban forestry protection and enhancement on private property in Seattle. My comments are intended to point out likely shortcomings of removing private property urban forestry regulation from SDCI.

Background: I was a land use planner at SDCI for 15 years until retiring October 2020. I was very involved with the application of the tree protection code involving proposed development during that time. The last three years at SDCI I was, initially, the only arborist in the department and then one of two until retirement. There are currently two arborists in the department.

I share the UFC's frustration with the loss of canopy on private property. I have also been disappointed at the lack of progress on tree ordinance update. But my greatest disappointment is

the inability of the City to fund the SDCI staff needed to adequately implement the tree code, old or new. Unfortunately I don't have any insights on why Item 164 of the Auditor's Report has not been addressed over the past 10 plus years. ("The Department of Planning and Development needs to conduct an analysis to determine resource needs for implementing the new tree regulations.")

Increased development caused by both population increases and constantly changing development regulations with greater density/lot coverage allowances are huge pressures on tree removal through land use and building permit applications. The vast majority of private property development applications require at least a preliminary review for possible tree impacts. A substantial number need a full review for conformance with the tree ordinance (current or proposed) and land use code tree provisions.

SDCI has a large number of non-urban forestry review and inspections employees to respond to the volume of land use and building permit applications. These same reviewers and inspectors are available for "pre-submittal coaching" to help ensure up front that requirements are understood and issues can be worked through before a formal application is made.

This is an estimate, but the building permit review and construction inspections staff alone probably number more than 200 employees. This doesn't include support staff, electrical inspectors, land use or zoning planners. Between 2008 and 2017 SDCI has one environmental analyst working at 80% capacity as an arborist. Beginning in 2017 I filled the arborist position at 100%. In late 2018/early 2019 a second arborist was hired.

Again, virtually every development application needs at least a cursory review for possible tree/development conflicts and a substantial number need a full review to ensure trees needing retention are identified and protected. This same level of scrutiny is required for trees and Green Factor trees proposed per the Land Use and Tree Codes, but here to ensure they are appropriate and are likely to survive. SDCI has two arborist reviewers to look at roughly the same volume of applications as the approximately 200 construction reviewers and inspectors. Additionally, there is no budgeted time for SDCI arborists to do inspections or work with developers/homeowners in the field.

All of this is not to say that the tree review and inspections responsibilities should be removed from SDCI, but that adequate staffing and resources must be made available to do the job. Review of land use and building permit applications for tree impacts involves a knowledge of the numerous codes that SDCI administers, such as land use/zoning, environmentally critical areas, stormwater/drainage, etc. This becomes even more important with the yearly changes and complexity of code changes for increased density, affordable housing etc. That knowledge relies on close working relationships with other staff in the department. In my experience, this can only be possible if arborists are a part of the review staff in SDCI.

Learning what are the current urban forestry best practices is an essential part of Seattle doing better - a lot better - regarding protecting and enhancing the urban forest. I share my perspective in order to ensure any possible centralization of the City's urban forest management, which may or may not be a best practice, does not result in severing the important function of arborist involvement in and knowledge of the development review, permitting and inspection processes in the department.

Thank you for the work you do and considering my comments.

Art Pederson  
Broadview