

Seattle Urban Forestry Commission

2020 Annual Report

DRAFT

Introduction

2020 was a very challenging year with the COVID-19 pandemic and Black Lives Matter protests putting a tremendous strain on Seattle. The Urban Forestry Commission (UFC) continued its mandate to advise the Mayor and City Council on policies and regulations governing the protection, management, and planting of trees and vegetation in the City of Seattle. The Tree and Urban Forest Protection Ordinance update, an effort eleven years in the making, continued to be at the forefront of the UFC's efforts. The UFC also issued recommendations on a range of topics to support City ongoing decision-making to continue to protect and grow Seattle's trees and urban forest, a critical piece of our urban infrastructure.

In 2020 the UFC's primary objectives were to:

1. Support the City's Tree-related regulations and policies
2. Provide input to the [2020 Urban Forest Management Plan](#) update
3. Weigh-in on City funding for urban forestry as part the budget process
4. Increase outreach and engagement with the public and City staff, and
5. Focus on UFC internal operations

UFC 2020 Accomplishments

Tree Regulation Ordinance Update

The UFC continued to support the City's work on updating the tree regulations and emphasize its seven key recommendations captured in a [one-pager](#):

1. Expand permit program
2. Certify tree service providers
3. Replace significant trees
4. Track changes in the urban forest
5. Protect exceptional trees, groves, and trees on undeveloped lots
6. Encourage tree retention on already developed lots, and
7. Fund and enforce tree protection regulations.

The UFC continued to encourage Seattle residents to provide input on this effort. In 2020, the UFC received 2,060 comments from Seattle residents, mostly encouraging the City to update and enhance tree protection regulations. All these communications can be found listed by date at the bottom of the UFC's Resources [page](#).

UFC Recommendations:

The UFC issued the following letters of recommendation related to SDCI's tree protection update work:

- [Tree Data Roadmap](#) (May 13)
- [Tree regulations update](#) (July 1)
- [Fee-in-lieu research project](#) (August 5)
- [Director's Rule 13-2020](#) Exceptional Trees (August 12)
- [Washington, DC urban forestry presentation](#) (providing an example of successful tree

- protection permit and fee-in-lieu program – September 9)
- [Director’s Rule 11-2020](#) Landscaping Standards, including Green Factor (September 9)
- [Racial Equity Toolkit](#) for tree regulations update (December 9)

The UFC supported City initiatives and City departments’ work with the following letters:

- SDOT’s [Safe Routes to Schools](#) (February 12)
- SPU’s [Ship Canal Water Quality Project](#) (March 4)
- Thank you [letter to the City’s Navigation Team](#) (May 13)
- [Green New Deal](#) thank you letter (May 13)
- [Black Lives Matter statement of support](#) (July 1)
- SDOT’s [Pest Readiness](#) work (September 9)
- [City’s 2021 Budget](#) (November 18)
- [Draft 2020 Urban Forest Management Plan](#) (December 9)

The UFC had the opportunity to engage and support the work of urban forestry and community partners with the following letters of recommendation and thankyou:

- [King County’s 30-year Forest Plan](#) (March 11)
- [Forest Health Watch](#) Project (October 7)
- [iSea Tree application](#) (October 7)
- [Cambium Carbon Reforestation Hub Development Initiative](#) Thank you, and [letter encouraging the City’s Urban Forestry Core Team](#) to apply for pilot city status

One of the areas the UFC focused on this year was to improve its internal operations by creating [Guidelines](#) for Briefing Coordination and Letter Drafting (April 8) and updating its [Coordinator Protocols](#) (April 1).

Over the years, the UFC has been monitoring several key Seattle Parks and Recreation initiatives. In 2020 SPR delivered updates for Cheasty Bike Trail Project, Viewpoint Policy, Colman Park Vegetation Management Plan, and the Green Seattle Partnership, including SPR’s response to Council’s [2020 Statement of Legislative Intent](#) about program goals and funding. The UFC will be issuing recommendations on these programs in early 2021.

Urban Forestry Commission/Urban Forest Interdepartmental Team Annual Meeting

The Commission and the Urban Forest Interdepartmental Team (IDT) pivoted from the traditionally in-person annual meeting to a remote training on racial equity and urban forestry. The meeting goals were to strengthen the partnership between the Urban Forestry Commission and the Urban Forest Interdepartmental Team in order to accomplish the goals of the Urban Forest Management Plan (UFMP); to understand the complexities of urban forestry work on the ground; share examples of good work; and discuss challenges.

Commission Membership

The Commission successfully recruited two new members in 2020:

- Julia Michalak – Position #1 (Wildlife Biologist)
- Elena Arakaki - Position #10 (Get Engaged member)

Weston Brinkley was re-elected as Chair for 2020 with Sarah Rehder serving as Vice-Chair.

The Commission wants to thank Steve Zemke (Position #1 – Wildlife Biologist); Steven Fry (Position #8 - Development Representative); and Neeyati Johnson (Position #10 – Get Engaged) for their contribution to the Commission’s work in 2020.

Conclusion

Weston to provide. Maybe mention that the UFC will incorporate race and social justice language into its protocols, work plan; and will revisit recruitment and other processes to encourage more diversity of perspectives and membership?

2020 Commission Members:

Weston Brinkley, Chair – Position #3 (University Representative)
Sarah Rehder, Vice-Chair - Position #4 (Hydrologist)
Julia Michalak/Steve Zemke - Position #1 (Wildlife Biologist)
Elby Jones - Position #2 (Urban Ecologist)
Stuart Niven - Position #5 (Arborist)
Michael Walton - Position #6 (Landscape Architect)
Joshua Morris - Position#7 (NGO Representative)
Steven Fry - Position #8 (Development Community)
Blake Voorhees - Position #9 (Real Estate Broker)
Elena Arakaki/Neeyati Johnson - Position #10 (Get Engaged)
Whitman Bouton - Position #11 (Environmental Justice)
Jessica Jones - Position #12 (Public Health)
Shari Selch - Position #13 (Community/Neighborhood)

Contact:

Additional information about the Urban Forestry Commission can be found at www.seattle.gov/urbanforestrycommission, or by contacting:

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