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April 20, 2022

RE: Ordinance 126554 Tree service provider registration

Dear Urban Forestry Core Team,

The Urban Forestry Commission (UFC) thanks the City for reassessing Seattle's tree canopy cover. For the first time, we will have robust, directly comparable datasets from which to establish trends in our urban forest, such as canopy loss or gain and changes in size and species composition.

The UFC respectfully submits a list of recommendations and questions that it believes are important to investigate. Answers to these questions can directly inform for urban forest management decisions with implications for tree canopy equity, climate resilience, and public health.

Regarding the datasets to be generated with the assessment:
- Tree Count: Assuming that this does not provide DSH estimates? Getting a count of trees by DSN is of interest, but as Chandra mentioned, that might come via a ground survey. If DSH can be estimated for the two time periods that would useful.

- Forest Patch Model and Ecosystem Service Analysis: Would like to see change analysis for both of these between the two time periods.

Regarding the research questions and associated analyses:
- Tree canopy influence on urban heat islands - How is heat island measured/estimated? Is this from an existing dataset or something the SAL team calculates based on tree cover?

- Land use and associated development influence on tree canopy - This is a very important question. What properties will be reviewed and how would they be identified? I'm assuming this would be parcels that were permitted for development.

    Would like to see this broken out by types of development. Particularly, Single Unit to Single Unit, Single Unit to Multi-unit, etc.
    What we would want to know is whether we are seeing tree loss associated with single units being re-developed to larger single units versus single units being developed to multi-units.

    Also, would this be a sample of development or a full survey of all developed properties?

Desired new datasets:
- Tree canopy cover
- Tree canopy cover change
- Point data of individual trees and their canopy size (spread) (for 2016 and 2021)
- Land area suitable for planting

These new datasets [total canopy cover and canopy cover change] can be easily analyzed by different "geographies of interest" (i.e., zoning, ownership, neighborhood, etc.). The proposal indicates that this is part of the analysis, but it would be good to be explicit about which types of units we want evaluated. I would recommend evaluation by (most of these are already mentioned above):

- Zone [need to identify which zoning types and how to group]
- Urban centers, hub urban villages, residential urban villages, manufacturing/industrial areas, remainder of city.
- Landownership/jurisdiction: Private versus public, and break public down by department jurisdiction (Parks, SDOT, etc.).
- Special areas of interest: EEIs, SDOT street tree management units, Urban Forest Management Units, schools, riparian areas.
- Industrial buffer zones? (i.e., the buffer areas between industrial and residential zones)

Other questions:
- How much land is available for tree planting and by land use, ownership types, neighborhood, and EEI? Will a data layer showing land available for planting be developed?
- How do patch size and connectivity differ by Urban Forest Management Units, neighborhood and/or EEI focus areas? How has forest patch size and connectivity changed between the two time periods overall and within these units?
- How much canopy loss (if any) are we seeing on private property without redevelopment? This would help us quantify tree canopy loss on private property over time outside the development process due to aging, hazard, views, gardens, etc.
- How has the distribution of tree canopy height and tree canopy spread changed over time? (Are we losing/gaining big trees)? How does this differ based on the geographies of interest listed above?
- How has tree count changed over time, summarized by geographies of interest listed above?
- How has tree cover changed in buffer areas surrounding parks? Tree canopy in the "matrix" surrounding a protected natural area can help buffer edge effects and "soften" the matrix between protected areas. In addition, trees lining streets leading to parks improves the experience of walking to the park.
- How has tree cover changed in priority corridor locations (assuming these exist)?
- For zones that are a priority for tree planting, how does the rate of change in those locations compare to the rate of change overall or in non-priority planting locations?
- The proposal mentioned storm water run-off services could be evaluated. Please include this along with the urban heat island comparison.
- How has canopy changed in areas with zoning changes implemented?

Sincerely,