



City of Seattle

Urban Forestry Commission

Joshua Morris (Position 7 – NGO), Co-Chair
Alicia Kellogg (Position 2 – Urban Ecologist) • **Becca Neumann** (Position 4 – Hydrologist)
David Baker (Position 8 – Development) • **Nathan Collins** (Position 9 – Financial Analyst)
Logan Woodyard (Position 10 – Get Engaged) • **Jessica Jones** (Position 12 – Public Health)
Lia Hall (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

Draft meeting notes

September 11, 2024, 3:00 – 5:00 p.m.
Via Webex meeting and in-person at the
Seattle Municipal Tower, Room 1876 (18th floor)
700 5th Avenue, Seattle

(206) 207-1700
Meeting number: 2503 580 2233
Meeting password: 1234

Attending

Commissioners

Josh Morris – Co-Chair
Alicia Kellogg
Lia Hall

Absent

David Baker
Jessica Jones
Nathan Collins
Becca Neumann

Staff

Lauren Urgenson – OSE

Guest

Katey Bean – SDOT
Rebecca Merris-Miche – SDOT
Sarah Maness – SDOT
Madison Tenneylaure – SDOT

Public

Timothy Randazzo – Get Engaged Applicant
Cindy Kozak
Steve Zemke
Nolan Rundquist
Dave Gloger
Dave Moehring
Sandy Shettler

NOTE: Meeting notes are not exhaustive. For more details, listen to the digital recording of the meeting at:
<https://www.seattle.gov/urbanforestrycommission/meetingdocuments>

Call to order: Josh called the meeting to order, offered a land acknowledgement and reviewed the agenda. The commissioners briefly welcomed Timothy Randazzo, applicant for the UFC Get Engaged position.

Public comment: Steve Zemke noted that the omnibus bill will come up for vote at the 9/18 Land Use committee meeting and that the basic tree protection area cannot be modified with the inclusion of SMC 25.11.070. Steve noted that there are two definitions of tree protection areas; one is in SMC 25.11.060 and

another is in SMC 25.11.130. Steve noted that modifying tree protection areas outlined in 25.11.060 would save more Tier 2 trees by following national tree protection guidance instead of turning over tree removal to developers. Steve urged the commission to speak on the contradictions in the omnibus bill. Sandy Shettler noted fixing the tree protection area is about one of five loopholes that allow for the removal of all trees on lots during development. Sandy noted that there are other provisions, not in the bill, that developers can use for removal, including 15-foot-wide houses.

Dave Moehring wanted to comment on the tree protection area definitions and to make a suggestion on the August meeting topic about the number of trees in the Duwamish Valley. Dave had three suggestions on the memo on tree protection pertaining to the definition of “tree protection area, basic” and “tree protection area” and they were: 1) retitle the definition about the basis of tree removal to be about the basis of tree removal area, 2) make sure the area of tree protection matches the area of tree removal, and 3) address the differences in the SMC about residential small lot and neighborhood residential because lawyers will favor the easiest approach in codes. Dave also noted that the 30 trees planted in South Park are only a small step towards equity in the area as it will need 6,000 trees to reach 30% canopy cover.

Joshua read comments posted in the Webex chat.

Chair, Committees, and Coordinator report:

Josh noted that Lauren and Josh met with Councilmember Robert Kettle and the Councilmember expressed interest in the commission and the commission should expect more engagement their office in the future.

Lauren provided some updates including the recruitment for 6 new UFC positions. There are currently 12 applications and 5 pending applications. Lauren also gave a quick update on topics that would be happening in the next couple of months including ST3 Light Rail expansion and the final draft of the Comp Plan, which is anticipated by the end of the year

Adoption of August 14 Meeting Notes:

The commission was under quorum, so they did not proceed with a vote for the August 14 meeting notes.

Green Factor Plant List Update and Presentation Debrief- SDOT:

SDOT interns (Ellie Anderson, Sarah Maness, Rebecca Merris-Miche, Hunter Ottman, and Madison Tenney), led by landscape architect, Katey Bean, shared a presentation about the SDOT Intern Project updating Green Factor Plant and Trees. Rebecca provided a summary of the scope and use of Green Factor in Seattle before presenting the updates to the Green Factor List. Rebecca noted that the plant and tree lists had to be updated because increased densification of Seattle neighborhoods in addition to climate and ecological changes on plant feasibility and selections. Rebecca noted that updates emphasized native plants, plants that offer habitat, “good neighbors” and species diversity while removing invasive and disease susceptible species. Rebecca noted that final approval is expected to be Winter 2024-2025. Rebecca noted that they are hoping to move the Green Factor list away from being a horticultural guide to focusing more on meeting score requirements, especially because it used by multiple City departments.

Questions/comments from commissioner Alicia Kellogg included:

- They were comfortable with concerns about trees with known stress issues by applying modern BMPs which include diversity instead of monocultures.
- Did SDOT factor in how trees provide heat relief and shade?

Katey noted that City Capital projects use a diverse palette of trees and that tree pits lead to tree stress and the Green Factor is looking into introducing the concept of soil volume. Katey noted that the 2008 list used canopy volume and SDOT wants to investigate adding volume into the list to account for the dimensionality of shade. Katey questioned the feasibility of canopy volume and its use for different users of the list such as SDCI vs the public. Katey also discussed a disconnect between the code and the list regarding canopy cover and that the code should be updated to accurately reflect canopy cover

Questions/comments from commissioner member Lia Hall included:

- Trees are planted close to buildings and that does not account for canopy spread which could be justification for removing the tree.
- There are a lot of maintenance requirements for replacement trees that need to be followed up with.

Katey noted that there are not many tools for City Departments on establishment care for trees which leads to higher rate of mortality for trees. Katey noted that there are a lot of communication issues with tree care responsibilities. Katey again noted the disconnect between the code and list can lead to confusion on the best tree match to location.

Questions/comments from commissioner member Joshua Morris include:

- Trees provide important habitat for insect fauna for birds and if SDOT has considered beneficial insects as a factor in the list.

Katey noted that they did not use insects as a criterion but asked Joshua for any information/databases so they could include it in the notes column of the list.

Public Comments:

Dave Gloger wanted to make a comment that for a lot of developments, trees are clearcut and then the streets are the only location left for tree planting. Dave also wanted to ask the UFC to be aware of WSDOT projects that impact trees.

Tree protection area UFC recommendations – discussion:

Joshua read comments posted in the Webex chat.

Joshua noted that there was a concern that the basic tree protection area establishes too large of an area around the tree and that it facilitates tree removal where trees could be retained. Joshua noted that the nomenclature of the tree protection and the basic tree protection area is a misnomer, and its only function is to serve as a basis for tree removal. Lia noted that an arborist should weigh in on the definitions. Lauren told the UFC that there is no strict timeline and that they can wait and revisit the conversation with a full commission. Lauren also mentioned that an arborist can be brought in to present to the UFC for learning sessions. Joshua reiterated Lia’s observation that the UFC should revisit the topic with an arborist.

Commissioner onboarding process – discussion:

Lauren expressed interest in commissioners’ perspectives and opinions on the onboarding process as the UFC brings on new commissioners. Alicia noted that there were discussions about meeting the entire commission instead of just the co-chair during the onboarding process and that it would be useful to know the background of other commissioners. Alicia noted that it would help the commission feel as a group. Lauren noted the possibility of in-person meetings at a higher frequency and having a first meeting for commissioners to meet each other without adding additional meetings to a schedule. Alicia noted that during their first meetings, they felt like an outsider and not fully integrated. Alicia found that the occasional sub-commission meetings have been valuable with other commissioners because the small working groups felt more productive and less stressful due to freer communication. Lauren asked the UFC to think about possibilities to make the larger UFC meetings feel more similar to the subcommissiongroups. Joshua mentioned joining meetings prior to trainings about the SMC and wanted to be briefed into tree protection ordinances, canopy assessment and other foundational elements to the UFC. Lia noted about an agreement about RVSP’ing to a meeting and to make sure that there are enough commissioners at a meeting to ensure more in-depth conversations. Lauren and Josh mentioned commissioners can only miss three meetings a year and that OSE might need to be stricter on enforcement of meetings. Josh mentioned that onboarding with expectations would help with attendance. Josh mentioned the preparation of meetings and better creating agendas to describe the process of meetings and expectations/purpose of the conversation. Timothy mentioned that a “UFC 101” would be valuable and can also be used by the public for UFC meetings. Lauren mentioned the “bike rack” idea where UFC commissioners would bring back concepts in future meetings when information is better available.

Subgroup Reports:

N/A

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Public Comment:

N/A

Adjourn:

The meeting adjourned at 5:00PM.

Meeting Chat:

steve zemke 9/11/2024 3:04 PM • not showing video - steve zemke wish to comment

Sandy Shettler 9/11/2024 3:11 PM • HI everyone, I agree with Steve and wrote this summary based on what I've seen on projects: The "basic" Tree Protection Area mandating ridiculously large "protection" areas for any tree being saved, in some cases over a hundred feet across. No city anywhere uses this formula! It is an International Society of Arboriculture definition for rural areas. (When adopted for urban settings, a caveat is added that it can be modified by an arborist to retain a tree. Many other cities routinely do this, like Bellevue). This provision only serves to facilitate removal of Tier 2 trees.

Sandy Shettler 9/11/2024 3:18 PM • Here is another provision which facilitates the removal of all trees on lots under development, it is also in the Omnibus bill under section 25.11.070: If any structure is less than 15-ft wide, any tree can be removed. This is not supported by other sections of the land use code. Seattle has many homes which are less than 15-ft wide.

Huge thanks to this group for working on this--it's so important and will make a difference!

Lia Hall #13 9/11/2024 3:20 PM • Agree with Dave —that is a more accurate characterization. I raised that issue with Christy and she said that they cannot rename that section because that's how it is written in the TPO

Timothy Randazzo 9/11/2024 3:23 PM • Thanks for mentioning that really important equity consideration for South Park, Dave - definitely agree.

Sandy Shettler 9/11/2024 3:23 PM • Agree with David--Residential Small Lot tree requirements are only for 1 "small deciduous tree" per unit of housing. South Park has only 12% canopy compared to 28% city wide. They will never get beyond this if all trees can be removed when lots are built out, and they only get tiny ornamental trees as replacements.

steve zemke 9/11/2024 3:26 PM • Tip 242A TreesRequirements Associated with Development July 8, 2024 Table - Limits on Tree Removal and Replacement Requirements on Developing Property in Neighborhood Residential, Lowrise Midrise, Neighborhood Commercial, Commercial and Seattle Mixed Use Zones This adds Lowrise and Neighborhood Commercial as covered under SMC 25.11

Lia Hall #13 9/11/2024 3:26 PM • Feel free to share this link to the application! <http://bit.ly/m/SeattleUFC>

Sandy Shettler 9/11/2024 3:27 PM • Can people in the room please speak up? Barely audible:(

steve zemke 9/11/2024 3:30 PM • Oppose just renaming "basis of tree removal area" This does not change the need to remove "The basic tree protection area cannot be modified" It reinforces the ability of developers to unnecessarily remove Tier 2 trees when they can be save by reducing the outer root zone by up to 35% in ordinance. conflicting language can be removed!

Dave Moehring AIA 9/11/2024 3:39 PM • Agree that just renaming "Basic Tree Protection Area" is not enough. What is enough is (1) revising "Basic Tree Protection Area" to "Basis of Tree Removal Area"; and (2) both definitions use the actual nominal tree canopy drip-line area as was done prior to July 2023.

Dave Moehring AIA 9/11/2024 3:43 PM • Regarding SDCI's Christy Carr's comment. Agree that the title of the Code Sections would not change (25.11.060 and 25.11.070). The 2023 phrase defined term within the code "Basic Tree Protection Area" would simply be clarified via this Omnibus as "Basis of Tree Removal Area". That way the phrase actually corresponds to its definition.

Dave Gloger 9/11/2024 3:43 PM • The photos shown in the WSDOT presentation exemplify the problems with the Seattle Tree Protection Ordinance. Existing housing is being torn down along with all the trees on

the property. And now the new ordinance allows for more hardscape and more loopholes to cut down all the trees.

Dave Moehring AIA 9/11/2024 3:47 PM • Confirm: Trees are one way of achieve Green Factor, but not required. In other words, trees are not required to achieve the required points. Question: Is it possible to make existing Tier 1 and Tier 2 tree retention and / or tree replacement as a prerequisite to achieving a Green Factor?

Sandy Shettler 9/11/2024 4:01 PM • I agree with Lia, these are poignant. It's worth noting that many cities have tree "bonds"--for example the City of Kenmore. This is pretty common, it's managed by third parties. The third party does not charge the City or the landowner or developer--they get to keep the interest on the bond amount.

Dave Gloger 9/11/2024 4:19 PM • The non-standard TPA was provided by MBAKS, hardly an arborist or tree expert.

Dave Gloger 9/11/2024 4:20 PM • This issue of TPA will probably come up at the next Land Use Committee meeting on Sept 17. So there is some urgency.