



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)

Timothy Randazzo (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

February 12, 2025, 3:00 – 5:00 p.m.

Via Webex meeting and in-person at the
Seattle Municipal Tower, Room 1872 (18th floor)
700 5th Avenue, Seattle

(206) 207-1700

Meeting number: 2493 534 6082

Meeting password: 1234

Attending

Commissioners

Josh Morris – Co-Chair

Lia Hall

David Baker

Nathan Collins

Timothy Randazzo

Absent

Jessica Jones

Becca Neumann

Alicia Kellogg

Staff

Lauren Urgenson – OSE

Alan Guo – OSE

Guest

Brennon Staley - OPCD

Public

Bill Loeber

Sandy Shettler

Steve Zemke

Suzanne Grant

Olivia Baker

Bill Loeber

Robert McClure

Michael Oxman

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:

Joshua Morris called the meeting to order, conducted a roll call of the commissioners, offered a land acknowledgement, and reviewed the agenda.

Public Comment:

Steve Zemke recommended the Urban Forestry Commission send a letter to the new Land Use Committee chair, Councilmember Mark Solomon, to ask them to continue filling the vacancies in the UFC. Steve also mentioned a new tree equity score across the country, split by census track, that includes Seattle and recommended that the UFC take a look. Steve included the link to the website in the meeting chat.

Sandy Shettler noted over 100 people commented at the Comp Plan meetings with City Council and newly appointed Councilmember Mark Solomon has made the Comp Plan and urban forestry a priority for his tenure. Sandy mentioned a meeting with Portland's urban forest manager and described some of Portland's tree management practices.

UFC Commissioner Updates:

Lauren Urgenson updated the UFC on the recruitment process to fill vacancies. Lauren noted a robust recruitment process was held last fall and Mayoral appointments were reviewed and submitted to the City Clerk's Office in December. Council appointments go through the Land Use Committee Chair. This process was delayed when Councilmember Morales stepped down from City Council. OSE is reaching out to Councilmember Solomon's office on next steps to fill the vacancies.

Josh Morris mentioned terming-off in March and there will be a need to identify the next co-chairs. Lia Hall asked if there was an opportunity for overlap between Josh and the next co-chairs so there is a chance to work concurrently and train for the position.

One Seattle Comprehensive Plan Process and Next Steps:

Brennon Staley, from the Office of Planning and Community Development (OPCD), gave an update of the One Seattle Comp Plan Process. They explained the general timeline of the process which started in 2022. Draft documents were released last year including a draft environmental impact statement (EIS) released in March 2024 for public comment. OPCD has been updating their draft plans taking into consideration public comments. The Final EIS is available online as well as the mayor's recommended plan. Brennon described next steps in the Comp Plan process and pointed out that there have been four (4) meetings with Council so far.

Brennon noted that the zoning proposal was released in October 2024 and OPCD is reviewing public comments. Brennon described two steps for sending legislation to Council. The first step is the HB1110 compliance which updates neighborhood residential zone and will be sent to Council in March for a vote

in May. Appeal of the EIS can delay the process until the appeal is resolved. The second piece of implementation is focused on the rezoning in neighborhood and City centers and is expected to be sent to Council in late May. Brennon noted that a delay on the first piece of implementation can also delay the second.

Presentation Q&A and UFC Commissioner Discussion:

Josh asked Brennon if OPCD expects an EIS appeal. Brennon responded EIS documents of this size and scope typically are appealed.

Josh asked if there was a summary of the upcoming changes in the draft regarding trees. Brennon mentioned that, at a high level, OPCD made changes to the Comp Plan to bring forward ideas of the Urban Forestry Management Plan as well as bringing in ideas from code. Brennon also mentioned the EIS references some modeling and data regarding tree canopy and the neighborhood zones.

Lia asked about the modeling process in the NR zone tree analysis. Brennon responded the model is referenced in the environmental impact statement and show a lot-by-lot basis as well as an entire block where four (4) of 24 lots are redeveloped. The full blocks reflect OPCD models which suggest 8-10% of units would redevelop over 20 years. The tree analysis conservatively assumes ~16% of lots redevelop over a 20-year timeframe.

Josh asked if it was typical to stagger the release of materials. Brennon responded that it is typical because of the size and length of work (over 3 years of development).

Lia asked if there was any federal funding for the plan. Brennon mentioned that the comp and zoning work does not have federal funding, but their anti-displacement work does.

Josh shared a side-by-side analysis between the UFC recommendations and updates to the Comprehensive Plan. Josh suggested there is still opportunity for Commission to work with Councilmembers on recommendations they would like to continue pursuing. David Baker and Nathan Collins thanked Josh for sharing the letter and suggested it was a useful exercise to see what recommendations work well to help inform the UFC's future recommendations.

Josh asked commissioners if there was something in the letter that they wanted to pursue further. David mentioned they would need more time to digest the recommendations to make further suggestions. Lia mentioned that they wanted to see more mentions of the immediate dangers/threats of canopy loss like the heat island effect and pest management. Lauren recommended, as part of deciding their next steps, the UFC may want to check to see whether topics are addressed anywhere elsewhere in the Comp Plan. Timothy Randazzo suggested they support continued consideration of all aspects of their letter since they were agreed upon by the UFC. Josh offered that the response to UFC recommendations was fairly standard. The UFC agreed focusing on prioritization of key ideas could be a good practice for the future.

The UFC agreed that it would be useful to reach out to councilmembers to discuss their recommendations directly instead of writing another letter of recommendation.

UFC Work Planning Exercise:

Josh led an exercise with the UFC on work planning. Josh went over the previous workplan and the six (6) areas of focus and suggested the UFC spend time identifying key priorities to inform a simpler workplan. Lia noted it would be helpful to have a cadence to the work once main working groups and goals are established. Lia also mentioned there should be a mechanism to follow-up on tasks and a way to hold the tasks and commissioners accountable and to ensure that their goals have been worked on and accomplished.

The UFC worked on a brainstorming Miro board based on the 1) issues the UFC should be focusing on, 2) topics the UFC is most interested in talking about, and 3) issues related to urban forestry that impact people.

Nathan highlighted tracking urban forestry budget expenditures, so the UFC has a better understanding of the scope and investments in urban forestry work.

David mentioned learning about examples of exemplary cases and wanting to compare tree policies to see how other cities are managing their urban forest. David also mentioned it would be useful to explain specific cases, at the lot level, that balance urban forestry with development so they could ground their expectations in realistic development scenarios.

Lia suggested creating an easy way for the UFC to learn and share knowledge with each other. Lia also mentioned that it would be useful for the UFC to have rotating quarterly meetings in-person as a goal for the next year.

Timothy emphasized Lia's suggestion that in-person quarterly meetings would be beneficial for the UFC so they could meet with the public and better connect with others. Timothy added advocacy and coordination with councilmembers and other Seattle leadership to increase relationship building.

Josh added public assumption of liability for tree care in the right-of-way (ROW) and noted public hesitancy to plant trees in the ROW due to concerns over assuming liability after planting. Josh also emphasized Timothy's point of advocacy and coordination with councilmembers and leadership.

Adoption of Meeting Notes:

The meeting notes up for adoption were from the October meeting (10/9/2024), the October special meeting (10/16/2024), the November meeting (11/13/2024), the December meeting (12/11/2024), and the December special meeting (12/20/2024).

Timothy moved to approve the meeting minutes with the amended language that Josh had included in an email to the UFC. The amended language Josh included was:

- 10/16/2024: Ending public comment - Michael "Dixon" should be "Oxman".
- 12/11/2024: Beginning public comment - Steve Zemke is referred to as "Steven" at one point. Should be "Steve".

Nathan seconded the motion. All commissioners voted "aye", and the meeting notes were adopted unanimously.

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Public Comment:

Lia had an additional comment that the UFC should flag their language choices as a commission and look at how they should use language in their recommendations.

Steve recommended that the UFC should take time looking at areas in the tree ordinance that have problems and at implementations that have been put in place but not acted on. Steve mentioned a One Seattle Tree Plan for tree protection and that the in-lieu fee should be adjusted to what Portland practices which is a "mitigation" in-lieu fee based on the size of the tree. Steve pointed out that the basic tree protection area has language contradictions regarding its modification during development that should be addressed.

Michael Oxman noted an article in the Seattle Times about parks being developed in downtown Seattle as part of the Downtown revitalization projects.

Adjourn:

The meeting was adjourned at 4:49PM.

Meeting Chat:

Suzanne Grant 2/12/2025 3:04 PM • Hello. I'm trying to listen on the phone, but the volume is extremely low. Is there anything that can be done on your end? Thank you.

Sandy Shettler 2/12/2025 3:08 PM • Hi I have my hand raised and have a public comment

Sandy Shettler 2/12/2025 3:16 PM • I have a question. Why did the person who was congratulated on being nominated for Position # 1 over a year ago get backburnered?

Sandy Shettler 2/12/2025 3:18 PM • Me too! Josh has been so awesome!!

steve zemke 2/12/2025 3:21 PM • <https://www.americanforests.org/tools-research-reports-and-guides/tree-equity-score/>

Sandy Shettler 2/12/2025 3:26 PM • Major problem with data on tree protection which SDCI is relying on: <https://www.investigatwest.org/investigatwest-reports/seattle-claims-to-protect-hundreds-of-trees-that-were-never-threatened-17788015>

Sandy Shettler 2/12/2025 3:29 PM • Plus there was a pandemic during that time.

steve zemke 2/12/2025 3:29 PM •

Tree loss due to development in 2021 Canopy study only counted projects started and finished in 5 year period misses canopy started before 5 year period and project started but not finished - agree with Joshua

steve zemke 2/12/2025 3:35 PM • Problem now is that most lots being developed will be clearcut for all 4 plexes and 6 plexes built in NR zone going forward

Suzanne Grant 2/12/2025 3:37 PM • I hear talk about "Equity". I wanted to share a comment made to me by Brennon Staley of OPCD at the One Seattle event at the Exhibition Hall in December. He told me that since I was interested in equity regarding tree canopy throughout the City, I would be glad to know that most of the trees being cut are in the neighborhoods that currently have a higher canopy coverage ie Queen Anne. This would provide "equity" regarding tree canopy coverage for neighborhoods that currently have a lower canopy coverage, ie South Park. I was astounded to hear him tell me this!

steve zemke 2/12/2025 3:38 PM • The issue is not comparing trees lost during development versus trees removed otherwise in NR Zone. University of Vern

Sandy Shettler 2/12/2025 3:40 PM • Not to bring up Portland repeatedly, but they are focused on maintaining and planting private property trees because street trees as a class of trees don't live long, therefore can't be relied upon as a city's chief canopy source.

steve zemke 2/12/2025 3:43 PM • University of Vermont noted that developed parcels in NR zone under old tree ordinance saw a loss of 39.7% compared to 1.8% on already developed lots. False comparison to compare tree loss on small number of lots being developed with large acreage of developed lots, and sayinly small loss of trees due to development.

Suzanne Grant 2/12/2025 3:54 PM • Thank you for sharing that letter and all that you tried to include. My reaction is extreme anger at the OPCD for not incorporating the suggestions of the Urban Forestry Commission!

Sandy Shettler 2/12/2025 3:55 PM • Tribal consultation, if you're asking the audience.

Timothy R. (he/they) - Position 10 Get Engaged 2/12/2025 4:05 PM • Will fight for this.

Suzanne Grant 2/12/2025 3:55 PM • Why is there so little response from the Commissioners about what they want to fight for?

Sandy Shettler 2/12/2025 3:58 PM • Thanks Timothy for bringing this up!

steve zemke 2/12/2025 4:00 PM • In previous draft EIS's there were comments given by city back on comments and letters from the public. I did not see that this time directly associated with the letters.

Lia Hall #13 2/12/2025 4:02 PM • You mean don't "work fast and break things"?

steve zemke 2/12/2025 4:04 PM • You can invite Councilmembers to come to a UFC meeting, Some have in the past.

Sandy Shettler 2/12/2025 4:05 PM • Thanks everyone--this makes a huge difference and is hopeful!

Michael Oxman 2/12/2025 4:25 PM • Here's my letter to Serattle Times reporter Jon Talton: In the Feb 9th, 2025 article, Downtown Seattle Is On The Mend, Jon Talton overstates the presence of new parks. No parks have been built in the core, ever, so the article oversteps. The waterfront park project is not in downtown. 'Walkability' does not include a hundred feet of stairs, or elevator rides. It is a black hole of funding-sucking projects, where 3' tall soil berms make any pedestrian access impossible due to steep grade designed to prevent jaywalking. Victor Steinbrueck Park remodeling replaced mature trees with

saplings. By my count, it is 2.1 miles between Denny Park to the north and City Hall Park to the south, with no other parks. Unless you try to count Westlake Park, which is also 94% concrete. The Downtown Revitalization Plan lists a goal of 15% tree canopy cover, yet there is currently 94% concrete & impervious rooftops, so the 'goal' is for greenwashers. The new hirise conversions from offices into residences include no pet relief areas for the lapdogs sure to move there, which I have written to DSA about, with no acknowledgment.

Michael Oxman 2/12/2025 4:35 PM • Please zoom in on the post-it notes.

David Baker UFC 2/12/2025 4:37 PM • Thank you, Alan!

Sandy Shettler 2/12/2025 4:42 PM • I like Lia's language--extractive is a great descriptive word for what is happening right now in every neighborhood as huge trees are cut for developer convenience, not because they are in the way of housing.

Thank you for speaking truth to power, you just need a megaphone. I don't have a comment now, just thank you for all you do.

Sandy Shettler 2/12/2025 4:46 PM • Yes--dispense with in-lieu. It means "in place of" in French. A dead stick from Home Depot does not replace the giants that are being taken down now across Seattle, even in communities like South Park.