



**Commissioner Present**

**Alicia Kellogg** (Position 2 – Urban Ecologist) • **Lani Chang** (Position 3 - Natural Resource Agency or University) • **Drue Epping** (Position 5 – Arborist) • **Tristan Fields** (Position 6 – Landscape Architect) • **Maeve Gillis** (Position 10 – Get Engaged) • **Melanie Ocasio** (Position 11 – Environmental Justice) • **Andrea Starbird** (Position 12 – Public Health) • **Lia Hall** (Position 13 – Community/Neighborhood)

**Commissioners Absent**

**Aaron Clark** (Position 1 – Wildlife Biologist) and **David Baker** (Position 8 – Development)

**Facilitators**

**Drue Epping** (Position 5 - Chair) and UFC staff

**Briefings**

Akshay Iyengar, City Budget Office, on urban forestry items in the Mayor’s Proposed Budget, Brennon Staley, Office of Planning and Community Development, on Comprehensive Plan updates, and Weston Brinkley, Office of Sustainability and Environment, on the City’s Tree Canopy Equity and Resilience Plan

*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*

**Public:** Naomi Goodman, Steve Zemke, Bridget M, FAIA, J GodFrey, Lylianna Allala, Shawn Richardson, Bang Le, June BlueSpruce

---

**DRAFT Minutes**

**October 8, 2025, 3:00 – 5:00 p.m.**

- 1. The meeting was called to order at 3:02 p.m., the Chair conducted the roll call, and the agenda was reviewed.**

2. **The Chair facilitated Public Comment and provided a guideline to the public for engaging in this period and requested that staff to copy this statement into Chat.**

**Steve Z commented on several points directed to the UFC:**

- He urged the UFC to watch the city budget, referencing the 2020 Natural Capital Assessment and the [2021 Tree Canopy Assessment](#)
- The city previously passed a budget to include canopy volume in the Canopy Study. Steve suggested that the UFC talk to the OSE UF staff who are working on the current Canopy Resilience Plan to incorporate the assessment that was not done.
- Steve promoted the work of a previous UF Commissioner who wanted to consolidate UF into urban forestry management, as opposed to having the UF work across multiple departments as it currently is structured.
- He urged the UFC to pay attention to SDCI's cover care of street trees.
- He noted a \$100,000 pilot incentive program for private property owners to preserve exceptional trees and groves.
- He alerted the UFC of Friday, October 10, 2025, when there was a briefing on the involvement of permits and grading or environmental review issues. He urged the UFC to look at grading, which was last updated in 2022. He referenced when amendments do not include trees near grading.
- He urged the UFC to get on the city's Land Use Committee mailing list to prepare for upcoming work planning.

3. **UFC Staff Reports:**

- a. The OPMA training will be 1 hour and will be held on October 28, 2025. The UFC has received a calendar invite. If a commissioner cannot attend, they need to email the [OSE UFC Liaison@seattle.gov](mailto:OSE_UFC_Liaison@seattle.gov) ahead of time to alert staff and to plan for another training time.
- b. News: The City of Seattle was recognized as tier two evergreen community by the Washington State Department of Natural Resources. This is a new accreditation that the State developed last year to recognize the City's commitment to urban forestry.
  - i. [One Year Anniversary of the Evergreen Community Recognition Program – Urban and community Forestry in Washington State](#)

4. **Commissioner feedback:** Lia would like to get some clarity on the process of editing letters. The Chair and Lia agreed that they would like clarity around the writing processes during the Workplan topic in November 2025.
5. **The September 2025 meeting minutes were approved when the UFC quorum was present. The minutes were reviewed, approved, and there were no edits.**

**Vote:** Lia moved, Andrea seconded, and the UFC unanimously approved the September 2025.

## 6. Briefing: Akshay Iyengar, City Budget Office

Highlights:

### Typical Budget Process Timeline



- Relevant for this time of year: In early November the budget chair will put forth a proposed council package. This is called the Chair’s balancing package. Sometimes before Thanksgiving, the Council votes, and if they approve it, it goes to the mayor. If the mayor signs this becomes the legally adopted budget for the city or the following year. For 2026, there aren't a lot of major changes. One change for the '26 proposed budget is that there is hundred thousand dollars of general funded SDCI to develop a Tree Conservation Incentive Program.

#### UFC Questions

- Lia:
  - Where does the deficit fall?
    - A: The 2026 budget is balanced. There is new revenue assumptions based on the FEPP Levy, a newly proposed levy on the ballot in November 2025.
  - What is the budget increase (i.e. is it 5%)?
    - A: No, it is around 3%

## 7. Briefing: Brennon Staley, Office of Planning and Community Development

*Background:* The City of Seattle is currently updating the Comprehensive Plan, a process that has taken several years. A key part of that process is a “growth strategy.” This implementation phase requires several steps, and the city has made 43 amendments. As of the meeting, the Plan has been voted out of committee, and it remains to go to full Council for a vote.

Context: The Select Committee on the Comprehensive Plan includes nine councilmembers, and this still needs toto progress to the next step of going to full

council to be adopted (i.e. even though the Select Committee is the same council members, the next step to Council is procedural).

The Select Committee is considering changes to the Neighborhood Residential Zones, which are the lowest density zones. Other changes that will be considered intend to comply with state law. This review has been a five-month process.

#### Tree Amendments:

Amendment 28: It amends the Climate and Environment Element to highlight the importance of trees, bees, salmon, orcas, and herons

#### Neighborhood Residential Zones:

##### Amendments:

87: Automatically waives parking for sites that preserve Tier 2 trees

91: allows higher FAR (2.0), height (42 feet), and density (1 unit per 500 square feet of lot area) for sites that meet Green Factor score of 0.6, retain at tier 1 tree, or retain at tier 2 trees

94: Allows height of 42 feet if planting and/or retention of medium to large trees would achieve at least a 10 percent tree canopy coverage at maturity

100: Requires planting of at least one tree per 2,500 square feet of lot area

#### Changes to Multiple Zones

##### Amendment 102:

- Requires that tree protection is determined before a determination is made about whether a tree can be removed
- Removes prescriptive limits on amount of modification allowed and states instead that tree protection can be reduced to any size provided that modifications are shown not to interfere with the overall health and stability of the retained tree
- Consequence is the tree protection areas determined by the city on a case-by-case basis; developers will likely need to get a determination on the tree protection area prior to designing projects and submitting permits

##### Amendment 104:

- Allows setbacks to be waived in NR zones to retain on-site or off-site Tier 1, 2, 3, 4 tree (rather than 50% reduction)
- Increases allowed modifications to standards in LR, MR, Commercial, and SM zones to preserve a Tier 1, 2, or 3 tree as follows:
  - o Front and rear setback and separation requirements: Increased from 75% to 100% modification
  - o Amenity areas: Increased from 75% to 100% modification
  - o Structure width, structure depth, and façade lengths limits: Increased from 30% to 50% modification

- UFC Questions

- Lia:
  - Just to clarify, the last points you made about the 75-100 percent modification, that's about how much into the setback you can go. Right?
    - A: Yes, there can be zero setback, zero separation, NO amenity requirement, NO landscaping and screening requirements
  - Is there an onsite inspection when allowances are made to verify the tree health or size?
    - A: Applicants would be required to lay out a site plan and be required for any associated arbor reports. The city does a pre-construction site inspection.
- Tristan:
  - There is a thought about doing a comprehensive code review. DNR does an outside code review. How is this integrated into the code? How does this work?
    - A: At the beginning of this process the mayor's office forwarded legislation to Council with cross-outs (i.e., underlines for new language). Each of the amendments covered in this presentation modified that legislation. The new piece of legislation is adopted, becomes effective, then the final version will be updated (i.e., to the new code as amended). This was a comprehensive look at the neighborhood residential zones as opposed to purposefully looking at everything. In 2023, there was a comprehensive look, but it was likely that DNR was not part of that process.

## 8. Briefing: Tree Canopy Equity and Resilience Plan (CERP)

This briefing focused on an update on the Canopy Equity and Resilience Plan (CERP) and next steps for this product. Context: The CERP was requested in 2023. The major areas covered were purpose, data analysis, priority locations, focused engagement, and City-wide Urban Forestry alignment. The purpose, progress, and timeline for the Canopy Equity and resilience Plan was presented to the UFC. Headwater People and Core GIS are the consultant team. A future update will be offered in winter 2025.

### Comments/Questions:

- Drue: Will in-language presentations be offered?
  - A: Headwater People, consultant will manage the analysis of language engagement
- Alicia: Frontline communities are overburdened Communities: How are you addressing this?
  - A: City departments and engagement staff are working together to address this
- Lia: Wonder if there are ways to incentivize engagement?
  - A: The consultant is considering ways to offer incentives
- Andrea: Will the plan involve any anti-displacement strategies?

- A: The consultant is considering a strategy related to this public investment

## 9. Update: Discussion Workplan

The workplan will guide how the Commission prioritizes key bodies of work, and it will assist subgroups in pre-planning each month. Please provide feedback to help the Consultant and staff orient and support your meeting time in November 2025.

### Prompt

Which top bodies of work should we focus on to begin our meeting in November?

### UFC Priority:

Note: Lani did not provide feedback verbally or via Chat

- CERP – Andrea, Drue, Lia, Maeve, Tristan (update only)
- Code Review – Maeve, Alicia, Andrea, Tristan
  - UFC would like to see a timeline of where the city is at with this area
- Phase II Legislation – Andrea, Drue, Lia, Tristan
- Budget – No support at the time of this meeting was recorded as a “thumbs up”

## 10. Public comment (Verbal and Chat):

### **Steve Z:**

- Commented on the CERP presentation that the Urban Forest Management Plan, canopy volume and value in terms of equity, and loss of evaluation when previous projects were not finished.
- Noted that Council amendments can be considered each year and added this can be a lengthy process. Finally, Steve noted SDCI tips and that they are outdated.

**See Chat for additional comment.**

**11. The meeting adjourned at 5:00 p.m.** Note: The Chair reconfirmed the November 12, 2025, meeting will be in person, and the location is being finalized.

### **Meeting Chat:**

**David M 10/08/2025, 4:58 PM**

PUBLIC COMMENT on OSE RSE:

Expanding on Alicia Kellogg's and Lia hall's inquiry... will OSE's qualitative approach of engaging front-line communities also consider the 'Street Tree Planning Study' by SDOT, as well? SDOT's quantitative study identifies what can be done with street trees relative to building equity within four of the several frontline communities, and SDOT's "In early 2025, the Seattle Department of Transportation (SDOT) launched the Street Tree

Planning Study as a pilot project to identify tree planting opportunities, assess community support, and understand local concerns in four RSE Priority Area Roxhill, South Park, SODO, and Capitol Hill/Olive Way—that represent conditions across the city. These areas were selected based on their diverse land uses, varying levels of existing tree canopy, and unique environmental challenges.

Funded by the Washington State Department of Natural Resources Urban and Community Forestry Program, the study was conducted in support of the city’s goal to achieve at least 30% tree-canopy coverage across all public and private spaces by 2037.

Read more about the study and the results on the SDOT Blog.

#### Study Overview

SDOT produced four reports that include the results of an arborist assessment and the community’s thoughts on street trees in their neighborhoods.

Capitol Hill Census 74.02 - Street Tree Planning Study

Roxhill Census 114.02 - Street Tree Planning Study

SODO Census 93.00 - Street Tree Planning Study

South Park Census 112.00 - Please invite to the UFC SDOT Urban Forestry's Katey Bean to share their DNR-funded Street Tree Planning Study

Phone:[\(206\) 450-7747](tel:(206)450-7747)

Email:[DOT\\_LA@seattle.gov](mailto:DOT_LA@seattle.gov) Reference: <https://www.seattle.gov/transportation/projects-and-programs/programs/trees-and-landscaping-program/tree-planning-study>

#### Public Comment (emails):

RICHARD E

Rivera, Maritza; **LEG\_CouncilMembers**; Harrell, Bruce

OSE\_UFC\_Liaison; +1 other

**CAUTION: External Email**

TO: The Seattle City Council  
RE: **Comp Plan Trees and Open Space for Families**  
DATE: Sept 12, 2025

FROM: Richard Ellison, Seattle, WA

Hello, my name is Richard Ellison and I've lived in Seattle since 1981; currently in Council District 4.

In this Holy War for Housing, in Greenwood at 504 N 76th St, 4 giant (55” 46 46 41” DBH) Western Red Cedars on the sides of the lot are to be cut for townhouses. “The project proposes removing 4 mature western red cedars, each with a canopy diameter of approximately 60 feet.” <https://web.seattle.gov/dpd/edms/>

A certified architect shows the trees could be saved by just moving the buildings over a little.

BUT in this Holy War for Housing, the Tree CODE ALLOWS FULL REMOVAL at the whim of the developer. You'd think it was written by TRUMP's orcs. Tear them all down.

In the Mitigation for Climate Housing, **Rivera's Amendments 93 and 102 are the only amendments that stop the clearcuts on private property, and still allow for full buildout.**

You get housing, as much as you want, and maximize the saving of healthy trees. Win win.

But In the Shadow of Mordor Housing Amendments 99,103+104, in full orc doublespeak, the 4 big Greenwood cedars could still be cut. There's no open space for big trees, birds, or kids to play, on any newly developed lot.

Is Seattle's 10 year Comp Plan a Seattle Sacrifice Zone? Is Seattle only to have only street trees and air conditioners?

Follow Seattle Urban Forestry Commission + ISA recommendations on how to save conifers while still building as much as you want. Just be smart, not orc double trouble Trump speak pretending to care but set them up to be cut.

As Chief Seattle is quoted to say: "***Where will the thicket be? Gone! Where will the eagle be? Gone! The end of living and the beginning of survival.***"

Thank you.

--

RICHARD [E<climbwall@msn.com>](mailto:climbwall@msn.com)

**LEG\_CouncilMembers;** Rivera, Maritza; Harrell, Bruce  
**+3 others**

Date Tue 10/7/2025 1:56 PM

**CAUTION: External Email**

Hello, I am a resident of District 4 and retired Seattle community college biology adjunct professor.

**1. I urge the City to consolidate urban forestry management under one department.** Seattle's tree management is currently fragmented across nine different departments, and competing objectives and conflicts create significant problems in maintaining and protecting trees.

No single department has clear responsibility for meeting overall canopy objectives. Consolidating urban forestry functions under unified leadership, including permitting, enforcement, planning, and direct management, would streamline operations and greatly help Seattle's tree canopy, and thus its citizens, native birds and wildlife.

**2. I urge the City to support the Mayor's Urban Conservation Easement pilot program.**

This would help protect culturally important community trees and tree groves by providing incentives for preservation. This could be through direct compensation and/or potential property tax reductions. This would represent an innovative approach for protecting ecologically and culturally important trees and groves.

**3. I urge SLI to explore expanded SDOT management responsibilities for all trees in the ROW.**

As the City loses so many large trees on private property in the development process, it depends more and more on street trees for its tree canopy. Maintenance of street trees adjacent to multifamily housing as well as single family homes is currently poor, in part due to the confusion of who's responsible for tree care and too often a burden to low income families who do not have the resources to care for street trees.

Please add one-time funding for a study for SDOT to assume maintenance and care of all street trees. While SDOT approves permits for all trees in the right of way, they care for only a small portion of those trees. Seattle's own Urban Forestry Commission recommends funding a study to understand the budget and operational resources needed for SDOT to take over management of all street trees and the tree canopy, and the potential environmental justice outcomes that could be achieved through such an action.

Thank you,

Richard Ellison, District 4