



Seattle Urban Forestry Commission

2011 Annual Report

Introduction

In 2011 the Urban Forestry Commission continued to work on advising the Mayor and City Council on policies and regulations governing the protection, management, and conservation of trees and vegetation in the City of Seattle. Most of the recommendations issued by the Commission have the goal of encouraging City decision-making to recognize the urban forest as a critical piece of our urban infrastructure.

The Commission's primary objectives are:

1. To help implement the Urban Forest Management Plan and achieve Seattle's 30% tree canopy cover goal;
2. To provide feedback and recommendations to City Council and the Mayor on specific policy actions that will ensure the long-term health and viability of Seattle's urban forest; and
3. To provide a forum for public dialogue to assist the Commission in its advisory role.



2011 Accomplishments

UFC Internal Structure

After working with three standing committees: Ecosystems, Management, and Community during the first year of the Commission, it was decided to do away with the committees and instead hold full Commission meetings twice a month. The idea was to expedite decision-



making by having the ability to vote on issues more often. Commission meetings take place from 3:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. the first and second Wednesday of the month.

DPD Proposed Tree Regulations

The Commission followed and reviewed DPD's progress on the proposal for new



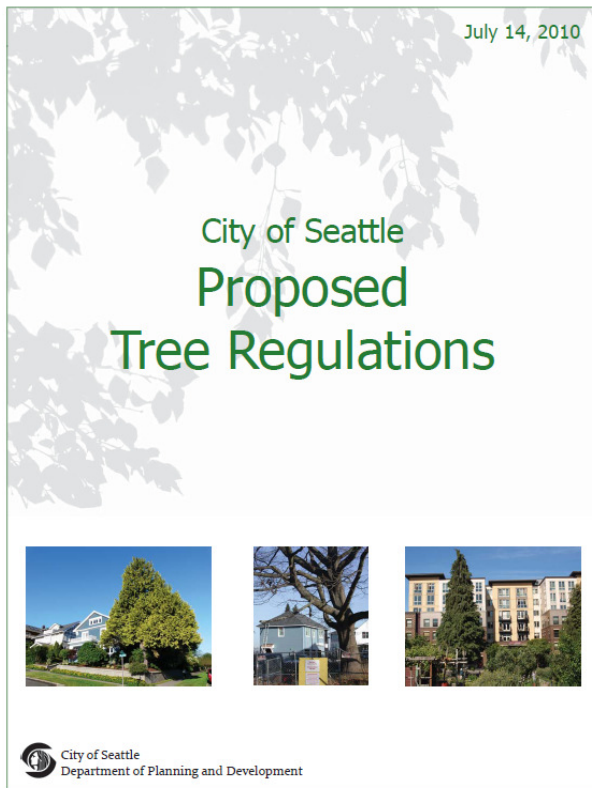


tree regulations in 2010. During 2011 this issue continued to be a priority.

The Commission elaborated on its recommendation by producing several position papers:

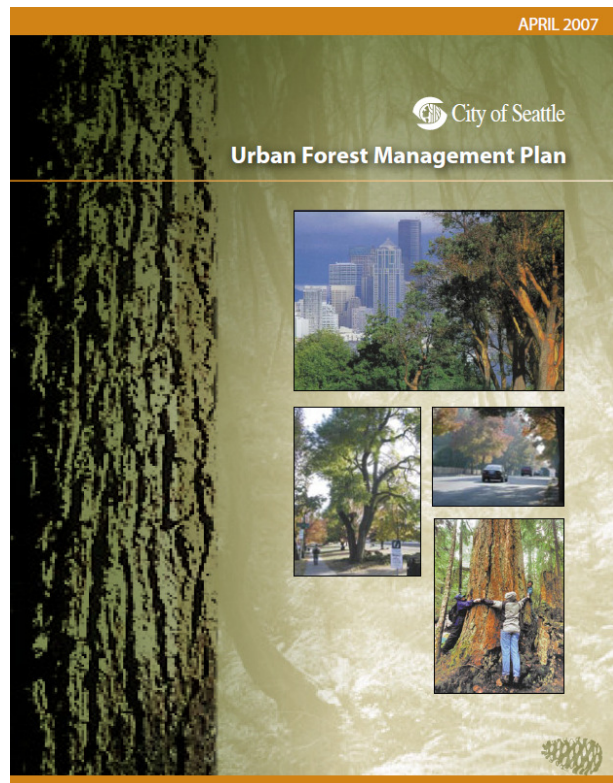
- Position paper on tracking and permitting of tree removals
- Position paper on professional standards for tree pruning and tree removal
- Position paper on tree standards for species selection, planting, maintenance, and protection

The Commission believes it is vital that code changes create a clear, consistent, and comprehensive approach to trees in Seattle. In 2012 the Commission will resume working with DPD, the Mayor, and City Council on a tree protection ordinance for private trees.



Urban Forest Management Plan

The Urban Forest Management Plan (UFMP) was created in 2007 to recommend tangible measures to preserve and expand Seattle's urban forest. The UFMP's over-arching goal is to increase city tree canopy from 23 to 30 percent by 2037.



It is the opinion of the Commission that only through a strongly aligned City Council, Mayor's Office, and Urban Forest Inter-departmental Team (UF IDT) can we hope to achieve the ambitious goals of the Plan. The Commission believes that, to effectively answer its advisory charge, the UFMP needs to be formally adopted by City Council.

To that effect, the Commission issued a letter requesting the formal adoption of the UFMP by Council. In response, City Council issued Resolution 31295 recognizing the 2007 UFMP and proposing formal adoption of an updated Plan in 2012. In the resolution, City Council requested the Commission to advise the Office of Sustainability and





Environment as it works with the UF IDT to complete the first five-year Plan update in 2012.

In October, the Commission and the UF IDT held a half-day joint working meeting to talk about coordinating work on the 2012 UFMP update.

Seattle Comprehensive Plan – Environment Element

In preparation for the 2012 UFMP update, the Commission made recommendations for the 2012 annual update of the City of Seattle Comprehensive Plan. The Commission’s intention was for the Environment Element to better reflect and be consistent with the UFMP and the City’s current canopy management approach.



Draft Shoreline Master Program Regulations

The Commission reviewed DPD’s proposed Draft Shoreline Master Program Regulations and issued a letter of recommendation and follow up comments to ensure adequate protection to existing trees and urban forest in the shoreline zone.

Seafair’s Torch Light Parade and Seattle’s Urban Forest

The Commission wrote to City Council to express concern about the risks to the health of Seattle trees resulting from the pruning and other measures the City planned to take to accommodate the Seafair balloons on Fourth Avenue.

The Commission did a walk down Fourth



Avenue with SDOT staff to look at the conditions and noticed that there were several trees, many of them mature, healthy Northern red oaks that would require significant tie backs or pruning to accommodate Seafair’s balloons.

The Commission does not believe it is sound policy to spend taxpayer dollars or allow practices that have negative long-term effects, for short-term purposes, and encouraged a broader discussion about future solutions which could include discontinuing the use of balloons or the City designating a downtown street for parades and festivals.

Community Tree Plating and Education Programs

In response to a City Council Statement of Legislative Intent, the Mayor propose to consolidate the City’s community tree planting and education programs in the Seattle Public Utilities Department. The Commission was supportive of this approach as well of the creation of a new, fully funded, permanent position to implement the consolidated program’s work plan.



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Outreach

The Commission had the opportunity to interact with the media in several occasions during the year. It became apparent that there was the need to have a clear and consistent message of the Commission’s goals and objectives for the public. The Commission produced a messaging document that included the mandate, goals, objectives, and recent activities of the Commission as well as a Frequently Asked Questions section.

The Commission is Seeking an Arborist

The Commission is looking for a new member to fill the Arborist role in Position #5. The term would start when the position is filled and extend through December 1, 2014. To be considered, applicants must have board certification as a Master Arborist or Municipal Specialist from the International Society of Arboriculture; or certification by the American Society of Consulting Arborists; or background and experience in Tree Risk Assessment from a credentializing agency or a professional organization.

This position is appointed by City Council for a renewable, three-year term. To apply, please email letter of interest and resume to Sandra Pinto de Bader (contact information below).

Conclusions

The Urban Forestry Commission celebrates the conclusion of its second year of existence with yet another respectable record of achievements. We have built upon prior efforts to define the our mission and goals, and setting short- and mid-term priorities in a five year work plan as well as ongoing annual work plans.

The Commission continued to support the accomplishment of the City’s urban forestry goals by reviewing issues such as DPD’s Shoreline Master Program Regulations, issuing position papers in support of a tree protection ordinance, and continuing to

engage the public. We look forward to working together with the Urban Forest Interdepartmental Team, the Mayor, and City Council to protect and enhance Seattle’s green infrastructure.

Contact:

Additional information about the Urban Forestry Commission can be found at: www.seattle.gov/trees, or by contacting: Sandra Pinto de Bader
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2011 Urban Forestry Commission

Matt Mega, Chair
NGO Representative—Position #7

John Small, Vice-chair
Urban Ecologist —Position #2

John Floberg
Wildlife Biologist—Position #1

Gordon Bradley
University Representative —Position #3

Peg Staeheli
Hydrologist —Position #4

John Hushagen
Arborist —Position #5

Tom Early
Landscape Architect—Position #6

Jeff Reibman
Development Community —Position #8

Nancy Bird
Planner —Position #9

