



Managing Seattle's Urban Forest: The 2013 Urban Forest Stewardship Plan

The Urban Forest Stewardship Plan was adopted unanimously by City Council on September 16, 2013. The Plan includes guiding principles and recommended strategies and actions to foster an ethic of community stewardship, to increase the health of the urban forest, and to meet Seattle's goal of 30 percent canopy tree coverage by 2037. In 2009 the canopy coverage was estimated at 23 percent.

The Plan is built around an integrated and ecologically-based approach to identify priorities and develop guidelines for the care and preservation of trees.



The Plan is the result of a two-year collaborative effort between City staff, the Urban Forestry Commission, community groups and residents to produce a blueprint to preserve, maintain, restore, and plant trees in Seattle. Inspiring community members to steward trees in their own communities is a critical and integral requirement to make the Plan work.

An important element of the Plan is the Action Agenda which establishes the steps required to implement the plan's goals. There are over 100 action items with short-, mid-, and long-term time-frames. The actions have been grouped according to the plans' strategies and encompass community stewardship, urban forest resource knowledge, departmental coordination, resource management, and regulation. Over 70 actions are recommended to be completed by 2018.

Some of the actions identified in the Plan include:

- Deliver education programs such as Forestry U to engage traditionally underserved neighborhoods;
- Increase the portion of city right-of-way planted with street trees and other vegetation when SDOT conducts major maintenance or constructs street improvements;
- Improve maintenance cycles for all Seattle public trees to bring them closer to industry standard;
- Develop decision-making tools related to tree retention or removal decisions when infrastructure conflicts exist;
- Plant a minimum of two trees for each tree removed across all City departments;
- Explore the feasibility of increasing fruit and nut tree planting and/or establishment of community orchards on Seattle public lands; and
- Conduct a city-wide canopy cover assessment every five years.

City Council instructed departments to provide an implementation strategy, schedule, outline of policy decisions and cost to accomplish each of the above mentioned actions.

"Urban forests provide Seattleites with environmental benefits by retaining storm water runoff, cleaning the air and water, providing wildlife habitat and keeping carbon out of the atmosphere. Trees also increase property values, contribute to our sense of community, and make our communities safer. The urban forest is an essential environmental and economic community asset."

Richard Conlin
(former Seattle City Councilmember)

Seattle Urban Forest Management Plan 2013 Progress Report

Strategy	2013 Actions (Lead Department)	Accomplishments
URBAN FOREST RESOURCE		
Understand characteristics and complexity of the urban forest resource	Analyze tree planting potential data for all management units. Undertake pilot to ground truth information (OSE, UF IDT)	SDOT developed Tree planting prioritization criteria and mapping system to maximize benefits of tree planting projects
	Analyze Seattle i-Tree survey data to better understand existing conditions of our urban forest (Parks, UF IDT)	Parks started using i-Tree data to manage Developed Parks and Forested Parklands
	Update forest typing in Parks' Natural Areas (Parks)	Compiled data and began analysis/review of data use for improved management decision making
	Update Street Tree Inventory (SDOT)	4,400 edits were made to Street Tree Inventory
MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK		
Coordinate inter- departmental communi- cation, cooperation, and decision-making	Develop decision-making tools for tree retention or removal decisions where infrastructure conflicts exist (OSE, SDOT, SCL, SPU, DPD)	SDOT began development of Trees & Sidewalks Operational Plan. SCL developed and began pilot testing tree-removal decision tool for significant trees conflicting with overhead power
	Convene UF IDT and continue to identify and address interdepartmental policy and project issues. (OSE)	The Urban Forest Interdepartmental Team met monthly to coordinate efforts
	Monitor UFMP performance. Issue annual report (OSE)	Annual progress report issued
Preserve and restore the urban forest on City property	<u>Planning and design:</u> Develop policy to prioritize UF expenditures (OSE, UF IDT)	Policy to prioritize expenditures will be developed within the framework provided by the 2013 Urban Forest Stewardship Plan
	Implement hazard street tree management program (SDOT)	Draft plan in review. Eight SDOT arborists TRAQ certified
	Explore opportunities to maximize available planting space using existing/new technologies (SDOT, Parks)	Parks used Silva cells, structural soil, and bio-swales in downtown Bell Street project
	<u>Planting:</u> <u>Trees planted and maintained by the City:</u> Plant two trees for each tree removed across all departments. (UF IDT) Plant 250 trees in Developed Parks (Parks) Plant 600+ trees with BTG and Capital Projects (SDOT)	The Zoo removed 10 and planted 27 trees Seattle Center removed 4 and planted 15 trees SPU removed 43 and planted 363 trees SDOT removed 76 and planted 1,097 trees (602 BTG, 495 Capital Projects) Parks removed 500 and planted 300 trees SCL removed 284 and planted 271 (+300 included in T4N)
	Explore increasing fruit and nut tree planting and/or establishment of community orchards on Seattle public lands (Parks, SDOT, FAS)	Developed MOU between Parks and City Fruit for orchard volunteer program
	<u>Trees funded by the City and planted by the residents</u> Assist community members in residential areas with low canopy cover to plant and care for 1,000 trees through the Trees for Neighborhoods (T4N) program.	Residents planted 1,009 trees through the Trees for Neighborhoods Program (300 of which were funded by SCL)
	City-wide tree planting total: City-wide tree removals total: Net gain (loss):	3,082 <u>917</u> 2,165
	<u>Maintenance:</u> Train staff in tree protection practices (SDOT, SPU, SCL, Parks, DPD)	Parks arborists delivered eight trainings on tree protection during mowing/maintenance. SDOT updated FAS property managers on tree protection and regulations for trees on City property. DPD will train staff once the Private Property Tree Regulations Update is complete

Strategy	2013 Actions (Lead Department)	Accomplishments
MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK		
	Identify and prioritize removal of invasive species from non-Parks City properties (FAS, SDOT, SCL)	SDOT continued Noxious Weed control program in coordination with King County
	Improve management and harvesting of existing fruit and nut-bearing trees on City-owned properties (Parks)	Developed MOU for Orchard Management
	Continue restoration on 900 acres of forested parkland. Begin restoration on 70 new acres (Parks)	Maintained 900 acres in restoration. Added 58 new acres
	Maintain 2,200 trees/year. Inspect 300 trees for risk (Parks)	Maintained 2,800 and inspected 150 trees
	Maintain 3,000 trees/year per BTG goals (SDOT)	Pruned 3,652 trees
	Prune trees away from 565 miles of electrical distribution lines for safety and reliability (SCL)	Pruned trees along 601 miles
	Tracking: Continue development of database management tools to assist monitoring, documentation, and evaluation of forest restoration work (Parks)	Created integrated database. Began utilization of data. Developed and published online map of restoration projects which is updated in real time
Regulate private property to ensure minimum standards for care of the urban forest	Submit tree-related legislation for City Council adoption: 2012 Urban Forest Management Plan update (OSE), Street Tree Ordinance (SDOT), Regulations for trees on private property (DPD)	2013 Urban Forest Stewardship Plan adopted. Street Tree Ordinance adopted. Private Property Tree Regulations Update on hold. Work will continue in 2014
	Consider expanding and tailoring Trees for Neighborhoods program to serve new populations (reLeaf)	Piloted program to assist elderly residents in planting street trees
COMMUNITY STEWARDSHIP		
Inspire and inform the community about the benefits of the urban forest and property tree care practices	Strengthen city-wide approaches to communicating about trees (reLeaf)	Completed research into effective public communication around trees. Collaborated with SCL to develop outreach materials around trees and power infrastructure conflicts
	Continue to identify special trees and mark their historic, biological, or other traits with signs or other means through the Heritage Tree Program (SDOT)	45 trees were nominated and evaluated by the Heritage Tree committee in 2013. 17 were accepted and added to the online street tree inventory map
	Implement Green Seattle Urban Forestry tree curriculum in K-12 schools (Parks)	Program completed in 10 schools
	Urban Forest Interdepartmental Team to update the City's reLeaf website (reLeaf lead, UF IDT)	Secured funding to update website. Work to continue in 2014
Engage the community in active stewardship of the urban forest	Expand volunteer stewardship opportunities through the Green Seattle Partnership, "Friends of" groups, Tree Ambassador, and other programs (Parks, SPU reLeaf)	Increased outreach to underserved neighborhoods and provided leadership training (Parks). Secured funding to maintain Tree Ambassador project. Held 18 Tree Ambassador events, engaging 575 people (reLeaf)
	Work with the Urban Forestry Commission on development of policies and programs to achieve UFMP goals (OSE, IDT)	Worked with the Commission on the 2013 UFSP plan update. Held joint UFC/IDT work session
	Parks to establish a process to obtain input from Friends of Seattle's Olmsted Parks on efforts relating to Olmsted parks in Seattle. (Parks)	Parks has incorporated Friends of Seattle's Olmsted Parks suggestions into individual park management plans, such as Volunteer Park and Seward Park
	Use the Major Institution Master Planning process to identify opportunities for planting and preserving trees (DPD)	On hold
	Work with local universities to pursue UFSP Research Agenda (OSE, re-Leaf)	Shared research agenda with Green Cities Research Alliance, UW, and USFS Pacific NW Research Station
	reLeaf program to coordinate with SDOT and SCL City's participation in Arbor Day (SPU/SDOT/SCL)	Parks hosted Arbor Day in Lincoln Park with support of SPU, SDOT, SCL, and OSE

Engaging Residents in the Stewardship of Seattle's Urban Forest

Tree Ambassador

2013 was a great year for the Tree Ambassador, the City of Seattle's volunteer urban forest stewardship engagement project. Tree Ambassadors build community and create investment in public green spaces. In 2013, the Tree Ambassador project engaged 575 people in eighteen community events, including hosting seven guided Tree Walks and seven street tree care and landscape renovation work parties in neighborhoods such as south Beacon Hill, Ballard, Fremont, and Roxhill.



None of this would have happened without the hard work of our Tree Ambassador volunteers! 2014 promises to bring the growth of the program to include more volunteers and events. Check our website to learn more: <http://www.seattle.gov/trees/treeambassador.htm>.

Tree Ambassador is a collaboration between the City of Seattle and Forterra. Work is funded in part by a grant from the U.S. Forest Service's Urban and Community Forestry program.

Trees for Neighborhoods

The Trees for Neighborhood project is going strong, and in 2013 added 1,009 new trees at 404 households in Seattle. 78% of these trees were planted in yards and 22% were permitted and planted along streets. Thirteen species were offered, including native, evergreen, fruit, and power line friendly species.

Participants attended workshop on proper planting and care and were also sent home with watering bags to help their new trees thrive through the coming summer. Overall participants were quite pleased; 100% of evaluation survey respondents said they would recommend Trees for Neighborhood to others for

reasons including "Adding trees to yards benefits everyone", "it is not only a chance to get a free tree but also a chance to get some guidance on how and where to plant a tree", and "the program is very well organized and it helps to keep Seattle green!"

Participants also receive an opportunity to attend a free pruning workshop and summer watering reminders. Trees for Neighborhoods has planted more than 4,300 trees since 2009.

Park(ing) Day 2013 Success!

Park(ing) Day is a nation-wide day celebrating the importance of green space in urban areas. The City of Seattle's Urban Forest Interdepartmental Team joined the fun in 2013 to turn a 40'x 8' parking space in South Lake Union into a miniature yet diverse urban "forest." The resulting display was truly a team effort with SPU, SDOT, Parks, SCL, OSE, and Forterra all contributing to make the day a success.

The miniature urban forest was located in the heart of South Lake Union and attracted the attention of many people during their morning commutes and lunch breaks. Over 200 visitors stopped by to take a self-guided tree walk through the space and learn more about urban trees and the City's urban forestry work. Visitors who took the self-guided tree walk entered into one of Seattle natural parks with native trees and understory plants. As they continued down the "trail", visitors walked into a more urban setting with houses, telephone poles, roads, and ornamental urban trees. City Light's miniature power line infrastructure was a huge hit among the visitors and drew attention to the important relationship between trees and power lines. Park(ing) day was full of many positive interactions and was a great opportunity to highlight the importance of the urban forest in a new Seattle neighborhood.

