SIMPLER, SMARTER & STRONGER PROTECTIONS FOR SEATTLE'S URBAN FOREST
The Urban Forestry Commission's recommendations for Seattle's tree protection ordinance update
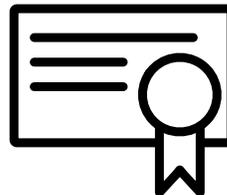
Seattle has a long-standing commitment to its urban trees. Because of the many social, environmental, and economic benefits urban trees provide, they are essential to enhancing the community's quality of life, especially as Seattle grows. Benefits include stormwater runoff reduction, improved air quality, decreased carbon footprint, enhanced quality of life, savings on energy bills, and habitat for wildlife.

Seattle has had an interim Tree Protection Ordinance in place since 2009. The Urban Forestry Commission (UFC) believes the protections the interim ordinance provides are weak, that the requirements are overly complicated, and that it is overall not effective. The UFC has submitted, upon the request of Seattle City Council and in alignment with section 6 of Council's March 2019 Mandatory Housing Affordability Companion Resolution, a proposed draft update that would simplify the ordinance and improve protections for trees.

THE UFC's JUNE 2019 DRAFT ORDINANCE WOULD HELP PROTECT OUR URBAN FOREST IN 7 KEY WAYS.

EXPAND PERMIT PROGRAM. The UFC recommends giving neighbors at least 2-week public notice through posting of a permit application.

REPLACE SIGNIFICANT TREES. The UFC recommends replacing any tree removed that had a trunk diameter of 6 inches or greater.

PROTECT BIG TREES, GROVES AND TREES ON UNDEVELOPED LOTS. The UFC recommends strong protections the big trees and groves which provide our city with the most benefits.

ENCOURAGE TREE RETENTION ON ALREADY DEVELOPED LOTS. The UFC recommends permitting fewer significant tree removals on already developed lots.

CERTIFY ARBORISTS. The UFC recommends registration and certification for all tree service providers working on trees on private property in Seattle.

TRACK CHANGES IN THE URBAN FOREST. The UFC recommends compiling data on tree removal and replacement for better urban forestry management.

FUND AND ENFORCE. The UFC recommends allocating adequate funding in the city budget to ensure tree protections are enforced.

TURN OVER FOR MORE INFORMATION ON THESE RECOMMENDATIONS

SIMPLER, SMARTER & STRONGER PROTECTIONS, EXPLAINED

1. **Expand tree removal and replacement permit program.** The draft recommends giving neighbors a public notice through posting of the permit application, starting 2 weeks before removal and ending one week after removal. This process is modeled after that used by the Seattle Department of Transportation (SDOT) and helps neighbors know when and where legal tree removal is taking place. Permits would be required for removal of any tree with a trunk six inches in diameter or greater on private property in all land use zones, both during development and outside development.

2. **Require replacement for any tree removed that had a trunk six inches around or greater.** This recommendation helps ensure intergenerational equity; future generations should get to enjoy a tree-filled city like we do. The UFC recommends that replacement trees should reach a canopy volume in 25 years equivalent to the canopy volume lost. Replacement can take place on site or developers can pay a fee-in-lieu. Those fees would flow into a City established Tree Replacement and Preservation Fund, which should also be able to accept fines, donations, and grants and to set up easements.

3. **Expand protections for Exceptional Trees, groves, and trees on undeveloped lots.** Big trees provide the most benefits to people and wildlife. They also take the longest time to replace, if that's even possible. The UFC recommends stronger protections for more of our larger trees so that future generations can benefit as we do. The UFC recommends that Exceptional Trees be redefined as trees with a trunk 24 inches in diameter or greater. Groves provide excellent habitat for birds and other wildlife and are becoming rare outside of parks. The UFC recommends maintaining tree grove protections, as well as prohibiting removal of any tree with a truck six inches in diameter on undeveloped lots.

4. **Encourage retention of trees on property not being developed.** The UFC recommends allowing removal of no more than 2 significant non-exceptional trees in 3 years per lot outside development. Current code allows removal of three such trees per year, a rate far higher than that of many other cities in the Pacific Northwest. The proposed change recognizes and appreciates the benefits urban trees provide.

5. **Establish citywide database for tree removal and replacement permits.** The UFC recommends tracking data on tree loss and replacement through the permit process. The data will allow the city to better manage the urban forest and satisfy public inquiry about legal tree removal through an online system.

6. **Expand SDOT's existing tree service provider's registration and certification to include all tree service providers working on trees on private property in Seattle.** This recommendation would help ensure quality, knowledgeable tree care professionals are tending our urban forest.

7. **Provide adequate funding in the budget to implement and enforce the updated ordinance.** Allocating the appropriate resources for enforcement is essential for any updated tree protection ordinance to be successful.

GOT SOMETHING TO SAY? THE UFC WANTS TO HEAR FROM YOU!

The UFC is actively soliciting comments on the proposed draft update to Seattle's tree protection ordinance. Please provide your comments, questions, concerns, admiration or frustration to Sandra Pinto de Bader at Sandra.Pinto_de_Bader@seattle.gov by December 31, 2019.