



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

November 13, 2024, 3:00 – 5:00 p.m.

Via Webex meeting and in-person at the
Seattle Municipal Tower, Room 1876 (18th floor)
700 5th Avenue, Seattle

(206) 207-1700

Meeting number: 2503 580 2233

Meeting password: 1234

Attending

Commissioners

Lia Hall
David Baker
Nathan Collins
Timothy Randazzo

Absent

Jessica Jones
Becca Neumann
Josh Morris – Chair
Alicia Kellogg

Staff

Lauren Urgenson – OSE
Alan Guo – OSE
Sharon Lerman – OSE

Guest Speakers

Becki Kniveton – Sound Transit
Mark Epstein – Sound Transit
Lindsay King – SDCI
Brennon Staley - OPCD

Public

Steve Zemke
Dave Moehring
Bridget Moehring
Caryn Walline
Cody
Evelyn
Richard Ellison
Tina Cohen
Gordon Clowers
M Manous
Angela Ginorio
PKS Jefferson – Urban Forestry

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:

Lauren Urgenson called the meeting to order, conducted a roll call of the commissioners, and reviewed the agenda.

Public Comment:

Richard Ellison made a public comment that was not recorded properly. Richard typed his comments into the meeting chat afterwards.

Steve Zemke noted that there is an understanding by the Urban Forestry Commission that there is a need to both increase housing while also maintaining healthy trees and neighborhoods. Steve proposed several ideas such as increasing units within one building and building vertically instead of horizontally. Steve also mentioned removing language in the omnibus bill regarding the basic tree protection area. Steve also suggested giving Seattle Department of Construction and Inspections (SDCI) more authority to ask for alternative site plans to save more trees when possible.

Dave Moehring brought up the changes in the Neighborhood Residential zoning plans for tree planting. He mentioned that the new proposal has a minimum of 20% open space for lots and that the open space does not need to include landscape and also reduces setbacks which can reduce tree size and canopy cover.

UFC Commissioner and Coordinator updates:

Lauren suggested moving the updates to the end of the meeting to ensure that the speakers for the day have enough time to present.

Presentation: One Seattle Comprehensive Plan Zoning Update:

Lauren introduced Brennon Staley at the Office of Planning and Community Development (OPCD) and their presentation regarding proposed zoning changes in the One Seattle Plan. Lauren mentioned that OPCD is looking into feedback, by December 20th, regarding their zoning changes.

Brennon introduced the updated Comprehensive Plan called the “One Seattle Plan” and explained that the zoning updates were updated to address housing shortages in the Seattle. Brennon explained that the timeline of the zoning update and comment deadline before submitting to City Council.

Brennon explained the growth strategy of the Plan, the roles that “Place Types” play in the City’s function, and their locations. Brennon then explained the changes to Neighborhood Residential Zones due to the State Law HB 1110 and the differences between the existing and new development standards. Brennon talked about unique cases that have different standards such as stacked flats, affordable housing, and stores. Brennon also explained that parking requirements are changing based on public transit availability in the area.

Brennon talked about the tree regulations context of the zoning changes and how tree protection, tree planting, and ECA/Shoreline regulations. Brennon explained the changes in tree planting towards the tree points system and the tree point requirements for lot sizes. Brennon said that modeling would result in 19-26% canopy after 25 years. Brennon also talked about changes in exemptions and set back reductions to preserve trees.

Presentation Q&A

Timothy Randazzo asked how tree maintenance works after the development process and who is responsible and how that is reported.

Brennon responded that the owners (apartment, condo, townhouse, etc) are responsible for maintenance if its on private property. Maintenance is required for the first 5 years on a complaint basis and the City will enforce if the public brings it to their attention. Brennon also mentioned that street trees are under the responsibility of adjacent property owners.

Timothy Randazzo also asked about if there was guidance on landscaping and maintenance for the open space in the new plan.

Brennon mentioned that there are also stormwater requirements in addition to tree planting. Brennon said there were no requirements for landscaping so people could have landscaping flexibility with their yard.

David Baker asked if there were height limit changes to the zones.

Brennon responded that the zoning change map shows changes in zoning for areas which results in development requirements including mostly height increases in zone area changes. Brennon also mentioned that there are small height changes within the specific zones such as 30 to 32 feet for Neighborhood Residential and 80 to 85 feet for mid-rises zones.

Lia Hall asked if there was modeling/estimates done for tree lost around Urban Centers such as 130th.

Brennon responded that at a high level, the environmental impact statement talks about loss at a City Level but also talks about 130th at a more specific level. He mentioned that they don't talk about specific numbers for localized areas due to changing factors from private property and can't model what will happen in the future well.

Lia Hall also asked about property tax for legacy homeowners and if there was incentive for staying in place without selling or redeveloping.

Brennon responded that were previous attempts to quantify the value of trees on private property but it is very difficult/expensive to change property taxes based on trees on a property. Brennon also mentioned that there has been work for legacy homeowners to help them redevelop property and that King County has a property tax relief program.

Timothy also if tree planting requirements had to be in the open space or could be planted elsewhere like a green roof and if there are guidance/incentives. Timothy also asked the rationale for reducing tree caliper size.

Brennon responded that trees cant be planted on buildings but can be planted in different areas on the ground level.

Lauren explained that the tree planting requirements are going from caliper to tree points and Brennon added that the tree point system encourages larger planted trees on a lot. Lauren added that caliper is more of a basis on tree size at planting and not at maturity and the tree point system looks at tree canopy potential instead of tree size at planting.

David asked if the tree point system is a novel idea and if other jurisdictions have successfully implemented it.

Brennon responded that the tree point system was developed in Seattle and based on the green factor and previously has applied only to Residential Small Lots.

Shanon Lerman asked if Brennon could repeat the interplay between setbacks and open space.

Brennon responded that currently there are setback requirements but no open space and the new system will have smaller setbacks but include open space.

Alan Guo asked if developers tend to use the wider 8' side setbacks, instead of 5' wide, so they can be considered as part of the 20% open space requirement.

Brennon responded that most lots are narrow and wider setbacks would make them even narrower so developers don't typically use the wide side setbacks.

Presentation: Planning for Light Rail and Trees:

Lindsay King, at SDCI, and Mark Epstein, at Sound Transit, introduced themselves and explained that part of Light Rail Projects is to create a project level tree management plan for the West Seattle and Ballard Link extensions.

Lindsay gave a quick summary of the West Seattle and Ballard Link extensions including project scopes and timelines. Lindsay explained that the City of Seattle and Sound Transit want to create a project-level tree and vegetation management plans to account for different property types and throughout all permit types. Mark explained that the plan provides a holistic strategy for tree management and allows for clear requirements leading to more tree planting with stakeholder engagement involved. Lindsay explained that light rail tracks will be in parks, private property, streets, ECAs, shorelines and the plan will be able to address all property types.

Lindsay explained that each Link Extension would have its own plan that will address City policy. Lindsay and Mark explained that the plan will address tree management before, during, and after construction for trees within project footprint and provided a list of what would be in the plan such as inventories, maps, requirements and best management practices. They also mentioned that the draft plan is scheduled for review and comment in Q1 of 2025 and a second phase of the plan will also be available for the UFC's review and comment.

Lindsay also mentioned that trees that cannot be replaced in the footprint of the project, the project will coordinate with City departments to find other locations for tree planting.

Lindsay also mentioned what the City of Seattle and Sound Transit is looking for in the tree plan and what information should be included.

Presentation Q&A

David asked if there is a section in the plan about what species they are going to procure.

Mark responded that there is a list of approved species for the plan and that they also intend on giving some direction for species that are native and drought tolerant.

Alan asked if there was an old plan that the Commission could look at, such as the Northgate extension, or if the plan is being made from scratch.

Mark responded that the tree plan will be started from new because the conditions are unique to West Seattle and are also broken into four sections but they will take lessons learned from old projects.

Lindsay responded that there has been precedent in Seattle for project level tree and vegetation management plans with the 520 project and the UW master plan which the UFC has participated in. Lindsay mentioned there's no direct replica but there is precedent.

Nathan asked if there is a post management strategy and if they were going to study how effective the management plans were.

Mark responded that there will be establishment plans and a monitoring period to ensure that plants will survive. Mark also mentioned that the plan could be used as a management plan for operations and maintenance crews but there's no formal study proposed yet.

Lia asked if there were going to be consultants, third-parties, or City departments that will look into the impacts on wildlife and ecosystems and how ecosystems will be able to reestablish themselves after planting.

Lindsay responded that the environmental impact statement mentions environmentally critical areas such as Pigeon Point and Longfellow Creek that are being studied in great detail.

Lia also asked if there was an understanding that not all places can replant trees and if there are goals to plant trees in places they didn't exist before.

Mark responded that the plan, when broken into sections and property types, allows to do an analysis to figure out areas where tree canopy is less than it should be and can plant in those areas.

Lindsay also mentioned that the project's focus is to replace trees in Sound Transit's footprint and if there's no space for replanting in SODO under the footprint, the project can replant in other SODO locations. Lindsay mentioned that they will be maximizing tree replanting in Sound Transit's footprint and then to distribute planting across the City based on the One Seattle tree plan.

Alan also asked if the tree plan accounts for different track elevations and how their footprint would impact tree replanting.

Mark shared a graphic showing tree planting guidance based on Light Rail Track elevations and how there are vegetative clear zones depending on track elevations.

Lauren read Cody's, a member of the public, question in the chat which asked if the offsite projects can start earlier than total project's anticipated completion date.

Mark responded that they could do some off-site planting if necessary depending on the impacts of the project.

Lindsay responded that the City prioritizes earlier planting as a goal if possible but the strategy and the details are still in process.

Mark also responded that the best opportunity for early planting is in the right-of-way.

Lindsay also mentioned that they were hoping to get the UFC's comments by the end of December before SEPA in January.

Commissioner Discussion: Debrief on Presentations and Next Steps:

Lauren mentioned that the UFC has two opportunities to give feedback on the Zoning Plan as well as the Light Rail plan. Lauren mentioned that the UFC could do some combination of subgroup meetings, the December meeting, and special meetings if they would like provide feedback on the two plans.

Lia mentioned that they would be interested in having a shorter meeting before the December meeting but also mentioned that it would be tough since the Commission is still short-handed.

Nathan mentioned that they would like to meet with any commissioner available to discuss the two plans.

David mentioned that he was interested in meeting before the UFC December meeting to talk about recommendations for the Comprehensive Plan.

Lauren mentioned that they would send a communication to commissioners to for a subgroup meeting before the December 11th UFC meeting. Lauren also emphasized that the Comprehensive Plan deadline was December 20th and the Light Rail Plan would be before Christmas. Lauren mentioned that next week or the first week of December would be the best time.

Lia added that it would be helpful if there was a tool, like a messaging interface, that could be open to the public but would allow commissioners to communicate with each other on non-meeting days.

Lauren and Sharon responded that they could look into if there is a tool available and to make sure it fits within OEMA guidelines.

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Public Comment:

Steve Zemke mentioned that they do not believe that the City has the same level of detail and intensity towards tree replacement during development as the Sound Transit plan that was presented to the Commission. Additionally, Steve mentioned that the point system doesn't appear to meet the 30% canopy goal and contradicts what the City had previously looked into. Steve also suggested that once the new commissioners are bought in, the UFC should investigate the meeting schedule and if a shift from monthly back to bimonthly would be useful and to accommodate for work schedules. Steve also mentioned that individual commissioners could send letters to Seattle City Council and can also comment as individuals.

Lauren mentioned that the tree planting requirements are in addition to the replacement requirements when a tree is cut down. Steve mentioned that there is a conversation about replacement off-site but what replacement is occurring if a tree is removed. Steve mentioned that Portland requires developers to do a tree removal and planting proposal up front and suggests Seattle follow something similar.

Richard Ellison responded to Brennon's presentation that the City can do a more detailed EIS for impacts on Neighborhood Residential Zones at a City-level as they had previously done for city-wide projects such as the ADUs. Richard emphasized Steve's statement about the City doesn't identify which tree will be removed at the beginning in order to change the site plan. Richard challenged the Commission to find ways for the development community to save big trees. Richard wanted the commission to find ways to find compromise because he believed that the City is stepping further away from protecting trees.

Adjourn:

Meeting was adjourned at 5:00PM.

Meeting Chat:

Lia Hall #13 11/13/2024 3:03 PM

i can't hear anything...figuring out my audio

Tina Cohen 11/13/2024 3:05 PM

Audio is very fuzzy, can you adjust your mic?

Lia Hall #13 11/13/2024 3:20 PM

thanks for sharing that Dave

Dave Moehring AIA 11/13/2024 3:22 PM

Thank you, Lauren and Commissioners. Now returning to Jury Duty. I sent email for reference prior to this meeting.

Lia Hall #13 11/13/2024 3:47 PM

In case folks don't know about this tracking map:

<https://experience.arcgis.com/experience/66fd79dfd25445b689b588b181c47d5a/page/Page-1/?views=Permit-Tree-Tracking-Database>

Timothy R. (he/they) - Position 10 Get Engaged 11/13/2024 3:49 PM

Thanks Lia! I did not know about this 😊

Timothy R. (he/they) - Position 10 Get Engaged 11/13/2024 3:56 PM

Thanks for the clarification assist David and Lauren 😊

Richard Ellison 11/13/2024 3:59 PM

For the ADU EIS the City did a more detailed potential impact review of tree removals by looking at a subsample of lots that had undergone development. Why is the City not doing a similar environmental impact evaluation of the rezoning of the NR and other zones?

David Baker UFC8 11/13/2024 4:02 PM

Thank you, Brennon!

Timothy R. (he/they) - Position 10 Get Engaged 11/13/2024 4:02 PM

Thanks Brennon!

Tina Cohen 11/13/2024 4:11 PM

I can't stay for the entire meeting to comment at the end.: This One Seattle plan contradicts other previous plan goals of 30% canopy coverage.

Also the proposed lot coverage changes will not allow enough space for large trees.

From Tina Cohen, retired certified arborist

Cody 11/13/2024 4:38 PM

With the time period for project completion being in the late 2030's, is it possibly for offsite projects to start at project start, so that benefits begin earlier?

Timothy R. (he/they) - Position 10 Get Engaged 11/13/2024 4:42 PM

Thank you Lindsay and Mark!

Steve Zemke 11/13/2024 4:42 PM

Thanks for the presentation.