



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

December 20, 2024, 2:30 – 3:30 p.m.

Via Webex meeting and in-person at the
Seattle Municipal Tower, Room 1872 (18th floor)
700 5th Avenue, Seattle

(206) 207-1700

Meeting number: 2493 534 6082

Meeting password: 1234

Attending

Commissioners

Josh Morris – Co-Chair

Lia Hall

David Baker

Nathan Collins

Timothy Randazzo

Absent

Jessica Jones

Becca Neumann

Alicia Kellogg

Staff

Lauren Urgenson – OSE

Alan Guo – OSE

Guest

Public

Steve Zemke

Tina Cohen

Chenell

Jean Trent

Jennifer

Ruth Williams

Sandy Shettler

June

M Manous

Martha Baskin

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:

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

Public Comment:

June commended the UFC for standing up for Urban Forestry in 2023 when the tree protection ordinance was being discussed. June made a comment that the UFC needs to stand up strong during the Comp Plan discussion for allowing space for mature trees to be retained on properties under development.

Steve Zemke suggested the City needs more research on different ways of protecting trees such as cluster housing which has a housing around a communal courtyard. Steve also suggested having a shared property line form of development that would set aside space to save trees. Steve also suggested removing the basic tree protection area in the tree protection ordinance and expressed concerns about the tree point system. Steve also mentioned that the in-lieu fee has not been in use. Steve also suggested a Parks and Recreation fee and to look at tree planting and retention areas with Portland's model being a basis of design.

Sandy Shettler thanked the UFC for working on the Comp Plan Letter of Recommendation. Sandy mentioned that Portland sets aside between 20-40% of land set aside for open space. Sandy also mentioned that Portland has hit their housing targets and suggest that Seattle can match Portland. Sandy also asked the UFC to stand up against the point system because it cuts the current tree requirements in half. Sandy asked for updates to maintenance requirements.

Jennifer wanted to discuss that trees are powerful bio-remediators, cited NOAA information that killer whales are being impacted by pollution, and that trees are a solution to remediate pollution impacted killer whales. Jennifer strongly requests the city to protect trees and include killer whales in the EIS.

UFC Discussion:

Lauren Urgenson walked through the draft Comp Plan Zoning Update letter of recommendation based on UFC discussion in meetings and as a small subgroup focused on developing the draft for full Commission review.

Draft recommendations re: development standards

- Maintain the 20% "open space" requirement and amend the requirement to provide more growing space for trees and limit paved surfaces:
- Maintain requirement for 20% of the lot area as minimum open space.
- Require at least 75% of the open space be at ground level (currently only 50% must be at ground level).
- Limit uses that count toward the open space requirement to trees, landscaped areas, or other nature-based amenities. Exclude paved and other impervious surfaces. For example, the UFC recommends in-ground swimming pools would not count toward the "open space" requirement.

Lia Hall wanted to increase the percentage of the open space to be increased from 50% to 100% at-grade and was agreed upon:

- Josh, Timothy Randazzo, and Nathan Collins support the increase
- David Baker suggested increasing from 50% to 75% and allowing up to 25% open space on the roof will also lead to increased natural cover.

Timothy wanted to open a conversation about the 20% “open space requirement”. Other commissioners were also interested in increasing the requirement. Josh updated the language to incorporate the other commissioners’ notes:

- Timothy suggested increasing 20% to 40% for open space based on Portland’s max open space requirements.
- Josh suggested not getting too prescriptive in the language change and would rather note that the language should maximize and ask for a minimum 20%. Josh suggested that they could include Portland’s standard as a suggestion.
 - Lia noted that increase the 20% to a new number could lead to a reduction in the ground cover percentage as a compromise
 - David mentioned a recommendation to maximize the space wasn’t specific enough to make a difference.
- David mentioned that the conversation is about whether to support the 20% “open space” requirement as opposed to if 20% is enough and was comfortable with the language already in place.
- The group agrees to recommend a variable open space requirement depending on lot density, similar to Portland.

Draft recommendations re: development standard flexibilities and incentives

- Maintain and strengthen development standard flexibilities and incentives to retain existing trees and create adequate growing space to support larger trees.
- Maintain the City’s proposal to waive off-street parking requirements in order to protect a Tier 2 tree¹. The UFC strongly supports this proposal.
- Extend allowances to waive off-street parking requirements to preserve Tier 3 trees and to plant medium-large and large trees.
- Maintain and strengthen the stacked flat bonus², as a building type that enables both increased housing density and more open space available for trees and other natural amenities. The UFC recommends the City direct OPCD to study and propose additional stacked-flat incentives to overcome cost, policy, and logistical barriers to uptake of this incentive.
- Develop incentives for combining lots and using building types and/or siting adjustments to allow for preservation of existing trees and/or space planting medium – large and large trees. The UFC recommends the City direct OPCD and SDCI to study and identify incentives to promote combined lots and siting adjustments as important opportunities to enable both increased housing density and space for trees.

Lia wanted to revisit the last bullet point and if they should give examples for “siting adjustments” in their language. Lia and David will update the language and provide examples to strengthen and clarify the point of the proposal.

- Lia wanted to use examples to explain the language.
 - Timothy agreed that using an example would be helpful in getting their suggestions incorporated by Council.
 - Nathan agreed that examples would help strengthen the example
 - David agreed that there should be a separate bullet point to mention the setbacks and that there should be multiple building types to expand on such as cottage courtyards. David also mentioned that different building types should change the height requirements in the zone to protect trees.

Draft recommendations re: tree Planting Requirements

- Maintain proposed updates to tree planting requirements based on tree points. The proposed tree planting requirement point system improves incentives for tree protection and planting of conifer and larger stature trees compared to the current caliper inch-based system which treats

all plantings equally. However, we request the City consider the following amendments to the proposed tree point system:

- Clearly define and require a minimum planting area for each canopy size category. We recommend the City direct OPCD to consult with SDCI and SDOT staff arborists to identify the appropriate minimum required planting area for each canopy size category.
- Adapt the point system for preserved trees to provide more points when preserving a large species tree or a conifer tree, similar to points for planted trees.
- Provide additional points for maintaining an existing medium – large or large conifer tree even if the tree is < 6 inches in diameter at the time of construction.
- Strengthen effectiveness of required 5-year tree maintenance for newly planted trees. Seattle Municipal Code requires newly planted trees receive 5-years post-planting establishment care. Without this care newly planted trees are unlikely to survive and grow to maturity. We recommend the City direct SDCI and OPCD, in consultation with SPU's Trees for Neighborhoods team, to study and identify ways of strengthening compliance with 5-year post-planting maintenance requirements (i.e. improved tracking and/or inspection, increased incentives, education, and support for builders and residents).

Josh wanted to clarify the first sub bullet point and Lauren clarified that commissioners wanted to a recommendation to ensure that trees had the appropriate space to grow to maturity. Lauren updated the language to include a note that newly planted trees are in a site that is suitable for their survival.

Josh noted that public comment had recommendations such as a Park Impact Fee and that commissioners are focusing on those recommendations for a different meeting.

Lia asked if it would be appropriate for bond language as part of the 5-year post planting maintenance requirement. David explained that the bond would have the owners put a financial amount on the tree that they would get back if the tree survives after 5 years. Lauren added language to include requiring tree bonds to better ensure tree planting survival.

- David, Nathan, Josh, and Timothy seconded adding tree bond language.

Lia suggested adding language to the introduction to reference the history of land-use in Seattle and how it impacts the way the City should address future changes in land-use.

- Josh, David, Timothy, and Nathan supported adding language to the introduction.

UFC Letter of Recommendation Vote:

Timothy made a motion to vote approve the Letter of Recommendation, with conditions that the commissioners will make final language changes based on the meeting's conversations.

Nathan seconded the motion.

Nathan, Timothy, Lia, David, and Josh voted Aye and the motion was adopted.

Next Steps:

Lauren gave the UFC a reminder that the Letter must be submitted by the end of day (12/20) with Josh signing it as the co-chair. Lauren also mentioned that all changes after the UFC vote must be in alignment with the content and meaning approved by the UFC during this meeting.

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Public Comment:

Steve Zemke wanted to note that there is still an opportunity to make recommendations to Council and that the mid/high-rise zoning changes will still have opportunities for further comments.

Adjourn:

Meeting was adjourned at 3:55PM.

Meeting Chat:

Lia Hall #13 12/20/2024 2:36 PM • I'm not sure if it's just my internet connection, but the audio is cutting out

Sandy Shettler 12/20/2024 2:36 PM • I'd like to comment--not sure if that got registered. Thanks!

Jennifer 12/20/2024 2:39 PM • If there's time I'd also love to make a brief comment.

Sandy Shettler 12/20/2024 2:52 PM • Thank you Lia. This is still not even what Portland does.

steve zemke 12/20/2024 2:55 PM • How many townhouses are going to have access to roof?
Support 100%

Sandy Shettler 12/20/2024 2:56 PM • There is currently no open space requirement. But with 65% unbuilt, we end up with a lot more than 20% right now. Agree with Lia.

steve zemke 12/20/2024 2:56 PM • Parking not required everywhere

Sandy Shettler 12/20/2024 2:57 PM • It is definitely a decrease over what we have now.

steve zemke 12/20/2024 2:59 PM • 30% canopy cover needs 30% lot open space. Only 20% guaranteed reduces canopy cover

Sandy Shettler 12/20/2024 2:59 PM • Just a reminder that Portland does 40 percent PLANTED space--double what we are asking.

Joshua Morris 12/20/2024 3:01 PM • Do you have a link or code section, Sandy?

Sandy Shettler 12/20/2024 3:01 PM • Thank you Timothy--yes, why ask for so little? When we know we can build all the housing we need with more than 20%
I'll get it--it's Portland code 11.50
<https://www.portland.gov/code/11/50#toc--11-50-040-tree-preservation-standards->

steve zemke 12/20/2024 3:03 PM • 20% open space does not mean 20% as a tree retention and planting area.

Sandy Shettler 12/20/2024 3:03 PM • Portland 11.50.050 It's important to note that developers can pay to buy this down, but it's expensive and they haven't done that much

steve zemke 12/20/2024 3:05 PM • Get more tree planting areas by not building separate houses but combine in 1 building.

Jennifer 12/20/2024 3:06 PM • I hope the UFC is able to consider the interconnectivity of the ecosystem. Trees support the entire ecosystem and what benefits the ecosystem, benefits us. Let's model Portland's Large Tree Amendment and simultaneously protect our bio-remediators, who protect the critically endangered orcas, marine life, birds, bats, and humans with clean and cool water. SRKWs had 87 members at the time of writing the NOAA SRKW Recovery Plan and now they're at 73 individuals total. Clearly they need more assistance as indicated in the federal

recovery plan. Seattle needs to follow the federal guidelines by not further eliminating tree bioremediation.

Timothy R. (he/they) - Position 10 Get Engaged 12/20/2024 3:07 PM •
Thanks Joshua

Sandy Shettler 12/20/2024 3:09 PM • The council will refer to the letter you are writing today many times in the upcoming months. This number is important. 20% was too low for Portland, which is why they did 40% where possible on lots with 1-4 units

Sandy Shettler 12/20/2024 3:10 PM • I mean that lots with 1-4 units have the space for 40%, not that the requirement is "where possible"!

steve zemke 12/20/2024 3:10 PM • Open space does not mean a guaranteed tree retention and planting area, You can have tree canopy over sidewalks and patios but need sguaranteed soil area for trees to survive

Sandy Shettler 12/20/2024 3:14 PM • Any lot on an alley is losing 25 feet of total ground in the new setbacks. The front is going from 20 to 10, the back is going from 25 to zero.
zero

Sandy Shettler 12/20/2024 3:15 PM • Why not add a bullet just for setbacks?

steve zemke 12/20/2024 3:15 PM • Courtyard building sites and lot division on common walls are ways to increase open space for trees. Coutyards could include tree groves which are not possible with current designs of separate housing units

steve zemke 12/20/2024 3:19 PM • Support height increases to save trees should be an option

Sandy Shettler 12/20/2024 3:19 PM • Thank you David, that's great clarification

Jennifer 12/20/2024 3:19 PM • Stormwater runoff:

<https://www.epa.gov/soakuptherain/soak-rain-whats-problem#:~:text=Runoff%20picks%20up%20fertilizer%2C%20oil,rivers%2C%20lakes%20and%20the%20ocean>. Trees as bioremediators:

<https://www.usda.gov/about-usda/news/blog/2019/08/30/trees-can-do-dirty-work-waste-cleanup>

Sandy Shettler 12/20/2024 3:20 PM • Yes there is in the Low Rise zones but not in NR
In Low Rise you can add a story if you save even one Tier 2 tree

Joshua Morris 12/20/2024 3:21 PM • Increasing lot coverage will increase pressures to remove trees and add impervious surfaces. To reach our canopy goals, address inequities, and reduce heat island impacts, it will be helpful to maximize preservation of plantable space throughout the development process. The UFC recommends considering larger minimum open space requirements, such as 30% or 40%, or explore a range of open space requirements depending on the density of the proposed development, as Portland, OR, does.

steve zemke 12/20/2024 3:21 PM • See <https://www.portland.gov/ppd/zoning-land-use/land-use-review-fees-and-types/middle-housing-land-divisions> for example of Middle Housing Land Division

steve zemke 12/20/2024 3:22 PM • Urge get rid of "basic tree protection area" and go with "tree protection area" in ordinance

Sandy Shettler 12/20/2024 3:23 PM • Agree with Steve on "basic TPA"

This would be a good place to add the suggestion of a maintenance bond. This is done throughout the country. Cities use third-party vendors who do this at no charge.

Jennifer 12/20/2024 3:24 PM • NOAA's Federal critically endangered SRKW recovery guidelines:
<https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/west-coast/endangered-species-conservation/southern-resident-killer-whale-recovery-planning-and>
<https://www.arborday.org/perspectives/wait-killer-whales-need-trees#:~:text=Trees%20for%20the%20salmon%2C%20salmon%20for%20the%20orcas&text=With%20more%20riverbank%20tree%20cover,salmon%20populations%20in%20the%20area.>
I believe the One Seattle Plan is not complying with the federal SRKW recovery guidelines by allowing the elimination of the most powerful bioremediators, large trees. Please help them by recommending large tree protection guidelines. Thank you!

steve zemke 12/20/2024 3:24 PM • Urge city pass a Parks Impact Fee to help increase park areas in city with low park number

Sandy Shettler 12/20/2024 3:25 PM • Photographic documentation of planting success retained for the five-year period. Submission of documentation to the Seattle Department of Construction and Inspections is not required unless requested by the Department.
Sorry, that was the language that is currently in the code--only a photo is required.
steve zemke 12/20/2024 3:25 PM • Cluster houses in Oregon <https://www.orcity.org/715/Cluster-Housing>

Sandy Shettler 12/20/2024 3:26 PM • Agree on minimum planting areas. Bellevue has much larger minimum planting areas than Seattle, for the exact same species:)

steve zemke 12/20/2024 3:26 PM • Oregon legislation allowing lot division on common walls as means of expediting permitting
https://oregon.public.law/statutes/ors_92.031

Sandy Shettler 12/20/2024 3:29 PM • I would be glad to explain it
steve zemke 12/20/2024 3:30 PM • Agree with maintenance bond as good idea

Sandy Shettler 12/20/2024 3:30 PM • The bond funds are usually a percentage of the total cost of the project, OR the cost to replant.

Joshua Morris 12/20/2024 3:31 PM • Require tree bonds to better ensure survival of required tree plantings

Sandy Shettler 12/20/2024 3:33 PM • You could probably shorten up that paragraph, the tree bond sentence renders much of the following language moot.

Joshua Morris 12/20/2024 3:37 PM • Increasing lot coverage will increase pressures to remove trees and add impervious surfaces. To reach our canopy goals, address inequities, and reduce heat island impacts, it will be helpful to maximize preservation of plantable space throughout the development process. The UFC recommends considering larger minimum open space requirements, such as 30% or 40%, or explore a range of open space requirements depending on the density of the proposed development, as Portland, OR, does.
<https://www.portland.gov/code/11/50>

Sandy Shettler 12/20/2024 3:38 PM • It's 11.50.50

Joshua Morris 12/20/2024 3:38 PM • 11.50.050 Table 50-2

Sandy Shettler 12/20/2024 3:39 PM • Oh thanks Josh, I dropped a zero

Sandy Shettler 12/20/2024 3:42 PM • I agree with Lia--it's the principle behind the intent of the entire endeavor.

Sandy Shettler 12/20/2024 3:47 PM • This is so powerful--a restoration mindset rather than asking how much more we can extract economically from this land. Restoration for nature and people.

Jean Trent 12/20/2024 3:48 PM • Hello, I'm a visitor to this meeting. Thank you all for your service, and for submitting your research and recommendations to our representatives.

steve zemke 12/20/2024 3:49 PM • The OPCD Legislation with any changes they make will go to the Sseattle City Council for review and voting on by June deeadline for city to update The Comprehensive Plan. Stil to come is Mid and High rise zoning draft and opportunity to comment also. All legislation before Council will allow opportunity for additional input opportunity for UFC comment. Council will make final decision on updates.

Sandy Shettler 12/20/2024 3:49 PM • I spent the morning in South Park. I can still taste the diesel exhaust which is lodged in my throat. Yet they lost big conifers this week, the exact kind of tree they need for clean air. Thank you commissioners for putting this forward.

David Baker UFC 12/20/2024 3:53 PM • Thank you to all the members of the public that joined today!

Sandy Shettler 12/20/2024 3:53 PM • Thanks for having us! I don't have a comment--I'm really thankful for all of you!