

SEATTLE URBAN FORESTRY COMMISSION

Tom Early, Chair • Steve Zemke, Vice-Chair
Gordon Bradley • Leif Fixen • Mariska Kecskes • Donna Kostka • Richard Martin • Joanna Nelson de Flores
Jeff Reibman • Erik Rundell

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

January 6, 2016

Meeting Notes

Seattle Municipal Tower, Room 2750 (27th floor)
700 5th Avenue, Seattle

Attending

Commissioners

Tom Early – chair
Gordon Bradley
Donna Kostka
Joanna Nelson de Flores
Steve Zemke – vice-chair

Staff

Sandra Pinto de Bader - OSE
Nolan Rundquist - SDOT

Public

Michael Oxman
Emily Percival
Evan Shaw

Absent- Excused

Leif Fixen
Mariska Kecskes
Richard Martin
Jeff Reibman
Erik Rundell

NOTE: Meeting notes are not exhaustive. For more details listen to the digital recording of the meeting at: <http://www.seattle.gov/urbanforestrycommission/meetingdocs.htm>

Call to order

Tom called the meeting to order by reading the UFC's mission and the day's agenda.

Public comment

Michael Oxman – provided an update on a development project next to Kuboda Gardens.

Adopt December 2 and December 9 meeting notes

ACTION: A motion to approve the December 2 meeting notes as amended was made, seconded, and approved.

ACTION: A motion to approve the December 9 meeting notes as amended was made, seconded, and approved.

Street Tree Priority Planting Areas – SDOT

Nolan Rundquist – SDOT's City Arborist – presented this information at the Partners in Community Forestry in Denver in November. SDOT has GIS program to determine priority areas for street tree planting.

The project goals are:

- Rank areas of the city according to potential social, environmental and economic value of trees in locations that best support canopy cover, social equity and transportation safety.
- Display most current information on current stocking levels
- Identify areas where low stocking levels, available planting sites and high potential benefits intersect.

The tree benefits map shows:

- Areas with environmentally critical areas
- Areas along proposed neighborhood greenways
- Areas that can accommodate large trees
- Areas within urban villages
- Areas with low canopy cover
- Areas near high-need or underserved populations

Processing the map:

- Create a GIS grid feature class of 140 x 150 foot squares. Any square that doesn't intersect ROW is eliminated
- Develop a weighted scoring system
- Assign scores to a grid square when it intersects an attribute layer
- Calculate a total score for each square

The Street Tree Spacing map:

- Visual representation of stocking levels
- Outputs streets by color code to display
- Fully planted (average tree spacing <30 ft)
- Planted (average tree spacing of 31-60 ft)
- Under-planted (average tree spacing of 61-180 ft)
- Very few or no trees (average tree spacing >180 ft)

The darker color areas in the map indicate areas of greater tree spacing.

Priority streets mapping:

- Tree benefits map and tree spacing map combine to produce a priority streets map
- Areas with high scores are selected from the benefits map – a layer is created with this data
- Combined with areas from the spacing map which have low stocking levels – a layer is created with this data
- Use the 'select by location' tool, select the features that intersect in the new layers.
- Areas identified that would benefit from street tree restoration projects
- Tree spacing greater than 60 ft. and a high benefit score

UFC question: How do you interpret the chart on slide 7?

Answer: the map shows how the different elements interact with each other. For example, there are not a lot of wetlands in urban villages. As areas intersect with each other the tool assigns scores.

UFC question: will the tool give you the locations for tree planting?

Answer: that's one of the things we'll be doing as we update our inventory data. The better our inventory is the better we'll be able to determine potential planting areas. This doesn't mean that the neighborhood would be supportive of tree planting, though. In some neighborhoods we get high rejection rates.

UFC question: What are examples of neighborhoods that are rejecting trees?

Answer: Wallingford and Fremont are some of the most receptive areas. We had over 50% rejection rate in Beacon Hill. Reasons include Feng-shui issues (people don't want a vertical element in front of their homes) and not wanting to rake leaves.

UFC question: will the City not plant trees when the neighbor doesn't want them?

Answer: Right. SDOT doesn't plant in areas where the abutting property owner doesn't want them.

UFC question: you mentioned an app. Is that for SDOT only or is it public like Audubon's Tree Map?

Answer: Audubon will be able to pull data from SDOT's data. SPU and SCL have access to the app. We are looking at training Tree Ambassadors to capture tree inventory data.

UFC question: How do you define high-need and under-served populations?

Answer: Based on Race and Social Justice Initiative based on census tract and income levels. The tool puts higher weight on areas most used by people.

UFC question: What's the first contact SDOT makes when they are planting trees?

Answer: We design a door hanger that says that SDOT is coming to the neighborhood to plant trees and provide a photo and details of the tree species that we are planning on planting. SDOT plants the largest appropriate tree for the site. If someone calls in and has questions, they answer them. If someone calls to opt out of the tree, staff engages in a conversation and try to convince the resident based on the benefits of trees. 65%-85% of people usually say yes to new trees.

Nolan showed the Commission the GIS site and explained the extent of the right-of-way easement.

UFC question: how big is the SDOT tree planting effort?

Answer: The levy gives us enough funds to comply with the 2 for 1 tree replacement policy, so we are talking about 200 +/- trees per year.

UFC question: does SDOT have other properties that are not typical ROW?

Answer: yes. They are working on removing invasive plants.

UFC question: does Seattle have a non-profit to plant trees?

Answer: unfortunately no. We used to have TREEmendous Seattle, a tree planting non-profit. Their business plan was having the City fund their efforts.

UFC question: are there examples of non-profits in other cities?

Tree People (LA), Sacramento, TreePhilly.

UFC comment: Gordon met with the tree person in Milwaukee. One thing that they did there is that trees are treated like sidewalks, gutters, and light poles... trees are part of the ROW infrastructure. That's how they sold the idea of planting trees on the ROW.

Answer: it's easier to sell shade in Milwaukee than in Seattle.

ECA letter of recommendation – discussion continues

The UFC was waiting to hear comment from the Heron Habitat Helpers but they already sent comments informally. HHH included the need for protection during staging and foraging. Commissioners read Tom's comments to Donna's first draft and discussed. Donna will write a second draft to include agreed upon changes and edits.

2015 Annual Report – initial discussion

Commissioners discussed the annual report. Sandra will produce a second draft based on feedback.

2016 Work Plan – initial discussion

It would be good to discuss this work plan when the whole commission is at the meeting.

Public comment

Michael Oxman – Listening to the meeting and reading the documents as years go by I go to the City's Auditor report saying that a single department should be coordinating this program. If City Hall felt that this is important it would have been done. So, unless the UFC weighs in, this is not going to happen. We are at less than 50% capacity with 3 maintenance crews (for SDOT) but Plant Amnesty says they need six. Someone has to say that ECA revisions need to be done by the same department as Comp Plan and other policy decisions impacting the urban forest.

New business and announcements

Sandra updated the Commission on Positions #3 and #8 interviews.

Adjourn

Community input:

From: oxman86@gmail.com [mailto:oxman86@gmail.com] **On Behalf Of** Michael Oxman

Sent: Wednesday, January 06, 2016 5:20 PM

To: Pinto de Bader, Sandra

Subject: Kubota Garden abutment

Hi Urban Forestry Commissioners,

Here's the DPD web page concerning my comments to the Urban Forestry Commission today (January 3rd). The address of the 1.3 acre, 7 unit subdivision is 9684C 51st Ave S.

<http://www.seattle.gov/dpd/toolsresources/Map/detail/default.htm?lat=47.5146&dap=Y&lon=-122.26844&addr=9684C%2051ST%20AVE%20S>

On December 23rd, I sent a photo of a trackhoe next to an unfenced tree to the DPD code compliance inspector, but the complaint was not noted on the web page until December 30th.

This photo is proof of a violation of the terms of the building permit.

Please check to see if the investigation results in issuance of a Notice of Violation.

Thanks,

Michael Oxman