



# Seattle Urban Forestry Commission 2018 Annual Report

## Introduction

In 2018 the Urban Forestry Commission (UFC) ramped up its efforts to support the City in updating the tree protection ordinance. As the UFC celebrated its 9<sup>th</sup> year, it continued to fulfill its mandate to advise the Mayor and City Council on policies and regulations governing the protection, management, and conservation of trees and vegetation in the City of Seattle. The UFC made recommendations to support City ongoing decision-making to continue to protect and grow Seattle’s trees and urban forest, a critical piece of our urban infrastructure.

In 2018 the UFC’s primary objectives were:

- To provide feedback and recommendations to City Council and the Mayor on specific plans, policy and regulation that will ensure the long-term health and viability of Seattle’s urban forest;
- To support implementation of the Urban Forest Stewardship Plan’s goals and improve the plan through the plan update process; and
- To provide a forum for community organizations and residents to provide input and engage in dialogue to assist the Commission in its advisory role to the City of Seattle.

## UFC 2018 Accomplishments

### Learning from Partners and Strengthening Relationships

The UFC focused on learning about the work the City’s environmental partners are doing. The UFC engaged Seattle 2030, Sound Transit, Mountains to Sound Greenway, Port of Seattle, The Nature Conservancy, Forterra, City Fruit, and King Conservation District.

The UFC continued to build partnerships with

the community and City departments. The UFC heard briefings from SPU on the Ship Canal Water Quality project, and Trees for Seattle; from OSE on the Duwamish Valley Action Plan and the Urban Forest Management Plan update; from SDCI on the Director’s Rule on penalties for illegal tree removal, the Mandatory Housing Affordability Ordinance and EIS, and the tree regulations update; from OPCD on the Green Factor Director’s Rule and Accessory Dwelling Unit EIS; and from Seattle Parks on their Viewpoint Park policy and Cheasty Mountain Bike/Pedestrian Trail Pilot project.



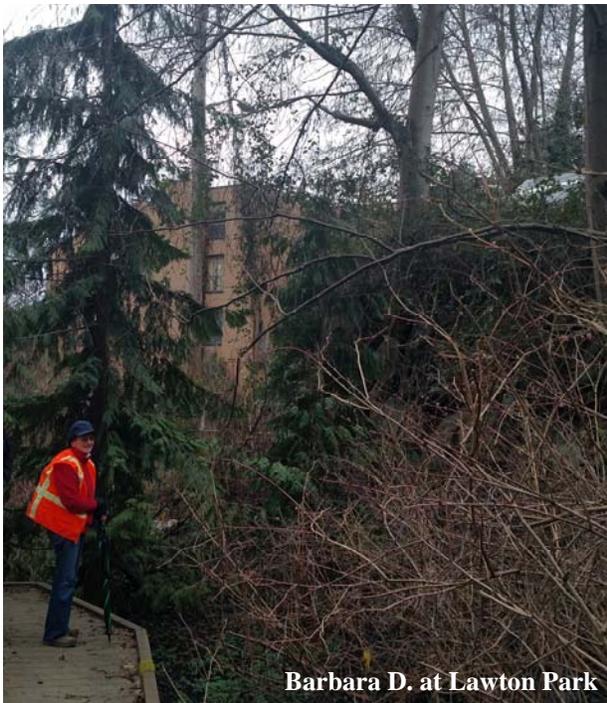
Additionally, the UFC met with City Council, Council Staff, and Central Staff on numerous occasions to discuss broad goals for urban forestry as well as revising tree regulations and the tree protection ordinance update. This included visits





from Councilmembers Bagshaw, Herbold, and Johnson, as well as visits from their staff.

Community members visited with the UFC to talk about forest stewardship in Lawton Park; the findings on the Green Seattle Partnership's moss as a tool to measure pollution report; the community's plans for tree planting opportunities as part of the Battery Street tunnel closure project; Othello Square project's landscaping and tree planting plans; and efforts for an integrated mapping tool piloted by community groups at Discovery Park.



Barbara D. at Lawton Park

**UFC Recommendations:**

The UFC issued the following letters of recommendation:

**Tree Regulations Update:**

The UFC stressed the importance to finding ways to allow for flexible management of trees by property owners, while protecting trees and accomplishing the City's urban forestry goals. The UFC recommendations included: keeping protection of groves and exceptional trees; reinstating a policy of no-net-loss of tree canopy by exploring incentives for tree retention and deterrents for tree removal; establishing a fee-in-



-lieu program for tree replacement, maintenance, and tree protection enforcement; establishing a tree removal permit system to track and monitor tree loss and replacement; requiring canopy impact assessments for development sites; establishing a tree service provider registration/certification to cover all tree work done in Seattle; including environmental equity considerations; removing the exception from the tree protection code for small-lot single-family zones.; establishing financial guarantees to ensure tree survival; and including requirements to follow industry standards and best management practices for tree selection and care.

The effort to update the City's tree protection ordinance first proposed in 2009 is long overdue. After consultation with Council Members, Council Central, and City staff, the UFC provided numerous recommendations on this long-standing issue (the UFC has written position papers and letters of recommendation on this issue over the years). The UFC issued seven letters of recommendation to support Councilmember Johnson's efforts to update the tree protection ordinance:

- [April 11 recommendation](#)
- [May 9 Trees for All proposal recommendation](#)
- [June 6 Comments to the May 11 Council Central Staff Memorandum](#)
- [July 11 letter on Enforcement of SMC 25.11.090 – Tree Replacement and Site Restoration](#)
- [August 31 comments to draft tree regulation update ORD D7 and the August 16 Council Central Staff Memo](#)
- [October 10 letter on adequately](#)





[resourcing an updated proposed tree ordinance](#)

- [November 14 response to policy questions](#) asked in the [September 14 Council Central Staff memo](#)

[SDCI's Draft Director's Rule 21-2017 on Calculating Tree Valuations and Civil Penalties for tree Protection Code Violations:](#)

The UFC suggested that no discounting factors be applied, and the tree appraisal value of the most valuable tree species be used, unless the offender can prove otherwise. The UFC recommended adopting a simpler tree valuation and penalty calculation and stressed the importance of creating a comprehensive permit system for tree removal and a tree worker registry to better support Seattle's urban forestry goals.

[Letter to Mr. Bruce Stotler:](#)

The UFC thanked Mr. Stotler for his decision to sell his property to the City of Seattle so it can eventually be added to Schmitz Park.

[SPU's Ship Canal Water Quality Program and 3rd Avenue Water Main project:](#)

The UFC provided comments and recommendations for the planting plan for the projects. The UFC recommended using trees that mature with larger canopies while providing clearance to vehicles and utilities; providing greater diversity of tree species (including conifers where appropriate); ensuring that understory plants are appropriate for site conditions including durability, low-maintenance, and provide habitat; and increasing the number of native plants at some of the planting sites. The UFC provided specific tree species recommendations.



[Accessory Dwelling Units \(ADU\) Draft EIS:](#)

The UFC expressed disagreement with the ADU-Draft EIS determination of no significant unavoidable adverse impacts to the tree canopy reduction. The ADU-Draft EIS underestimated tree canopy reduction. Stronger mitigation measures are needed to abate the biological, visual, and health impacts that the proposed zoning changes outlined in the ADU-Draft EIS are projected to have on the urban forest and tree canopy. Given the number of proposed cumulative impacts to tree canopy resulting from code changes related to development currently underway, the UFC recommended including stronger, more binding requirements to promote and improve tree coverage when ADUs are constructed.



[Proposed Mandatory Housing Affordability \(MHA\) Ordinance and Green Factor:](#)

The UFC recommended changes to Green Factor multipliers in the MHA Ordinance, as they relate to existing tree retention and tree planting, do not go far enough to promote the retention of the City's existing tree canopy or to increase tree canopy in the areas affected by the ordinance. The UFC recommended establishing a hierarchy within the multipliers to further encourage planting of medium/large trees and preservation of existing trees.





In order to mitigate for tree loss (especially conifers) in single family zones due to development the UFC

recommended focusing on the tree species and size at maturity to determine tree planting requirements for a site to encourage evergreens and the largest canopy tree as appropriate for the site’s constraints, and increasing the points for medium/large trees and for preservation of trees at least six inches in diameter. Note: The UFC provided input in a [2017 letter](#) related to the MHA Draft EIS.

**Green Factor Director’s Rule update:**

The UFC provided technical input to the draft Green Factor Director’s Rule sections about minimum soil volumes, irrigation, and structural soil systems. The UFC also recommended finding ways to change the perception of trees being a disposable, short-term piece of landscape and assigning the highest valuation to preservation of high-value trees such as mature conifers with smaller trees receiving lower values as part of the Green Factor worksheet.



**Urban Forestry Commission/Urban Forest Inter-departmental Team Annual Meeting**

The Commission and the Urban Forest Inter-departmental Team had their 8<sup>th</sup> annual meeting at Camp Long. The facilitated meeting focused on strengthening the partnership between the Urban Forestry Commission and the Urban Forest Inter-departmental Team in order to accomplish the goals of the 2013 Urban Forest Stewardship Plan (UFSP) and begin exploring opportunities for including public

health as a component of the 2019 Urban Forest Management plan update.



**Commission Membership**

The Commission expanded its membership to include Environmental Justice, Public Health and Community/Neighborhood representatives. Seven new members joined the Urban Forestry Commission in 2018:

- \* Sandra Whiting—Position#2 (Urban Ecologist)
- \* Stuart Niven—Position #5 (Arborist)
- \* Michael Walton—Position #6 (Landscape Architect)
- \* Bonnie Lei— Position #10 (Get Engaged member)
- \* Whitman Bouton—Position #11 (Environmental Justice)
- \* Jessica Jones—Position #12 (Public Health), and
- \* Shari Selch—Position #13 (Community/ Neighborhood representative)

Weston Brinkley was elected Chair for 2019 with Sandra Whiting serving as Vice-Chair.

**Conclusion**

2018 was an eventful year for Seattle’s urban forest. The UFC continues to work towards a long overdue update for the City’s tree code and other associated policies. This effort has been on the top of the UFC’s priority list since its inception in 2009. Huge strides were made in developing this policy with efforts from City staff, City Council and the public. The UFC looks forward to finally marshaling a new code across the finish line in 2019.





This past year also saw the important launch of the planning process for the update to the Seattle Urban Forest Management Plan. This critical document will be updated next year, and include not only improved data, but a comprehensive social and environmental equity component providing with the best guide yet for preserving and expanding Seattle’s forests.

The UFC expanded its ranks this past year, onboarding seven new commissioners. The UFC looks forward to continuing to incorporate new perspectives in its work and will be looking for more community engagement opportunities as part of the 2019 workplan.

The UFC also looks forward to engaging more collaboratively through in-person deliberative sessions to support development of City policies, plans and regulations related to the urban forest. With a strong focus on continuing to move the tree protection ordinance update forward and pass the ordinance in 2019.

**Contact:**

Additional information about the Urban Forestry Commission can be found at: [www.seattle.gov/urbanforestrycommission](http://www.seattle.gov/urbanforestrycommission), or by contacting:

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## 2018 Urban Forestry Commission

Weston Brinkley, Chair  
 Position #3—University Representative

Joanna Nelson de Flores, Vice-Chair  
 Position #7—NGO Representative

Steve Zemke  
 Position #1—Wildlife Biologist

Sandra Whiting  
 Position #2—Urban Ecologist

Sarah Rehder  
 Position #4—Hydrologist

Stuart Niven  
 Position #5—Arborist

Michael Walton  
 Position #6—Landscape Architect

Andrew Zellers  
 Position #8—Development Community

Craig Johnson  
 Position #9—Real Estate Broker

Bonnie Lei  
 Position #10—Get Engaged

Whitman Bouton  
 Position #11—Environmental Justice

Jessica Jones  
 Position #12—Public Health

Shari Selch  
 Position #13—Community/Neighborhood

