

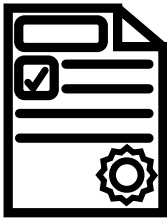
# SIMPLER, SMARTER, AND STRONGER PROTECTIONS FOR SEATTLE'S URBAN FOREST

*The Urban Forestry Commission's recommendations for Seattle's tree protection ordinance update*

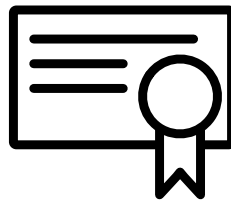
Seattle's trees form an urban forest that is vital to our quality of life. Trees remove air pollutants, provide shade and block wind which reduces energy bills, decrease the city's carbon footprint as part of Seattle's response to the climate crisis, reduce runoff from rainstorms, provide critical habitat for birds and other wildlife, and improve people's physical and mental health.

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 in preserving trees and increasing canopy. 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 draft tree ordinance update that would greatly improve current legislation.

## THE UFC's JUNE 2019 DRAFT ORDINANCE RECOMMENDS PROTECTING OUR URBAN FOREST IN SEVEN KEY WAYS.



**1. EXPAND PERMIT PROGRAM.** Give neighbors at least two-weeks public notice through posting of a permit application.



**2. CERTIFY TREE SERVICE PROVIDERS.** Require registration and certification for all tree service providers working on private property in Seattle.



**3. REPLACE SIGNIFICANT TREES.** Replace any tree removed that had a trunk diameter of six inches or greater.



**4. TRACK CHANGES IN THE URBAN FOREST.** Compile data on tree removal and replacement for better urban forestry management.



**5. PROTECT EXCEPTIONAL TREES, GROVES, AND TREES ON UNDEVELOPED LOTS.** Provide stronger protections for trees and groves which provide our city with the most benefits.



**6. ENCOURAGE TREE RETENTION ON ALREADY DEVELOPED LOTS.** Reduce significant tree removals on already developed lots.



**7. FUND AND ENFORCE.** Allocate adequate funding in the City budget to ensure tree protections are enforced.

**TURN OVER FOR MORE INFORMATION ON THESE RECOMMENDATIONS**

## SIMPLER, SMARTER, AND STRONGER TREE PROTECTIONS, EXPLAINED



**1. EXPAND PERMIT PROGRAM.** Give neighbors better notice of when and where legal tree removal is taking place. Public notice of a Tree Removal and Replacement application would be posted on site and online starting two weeks before removal and ending one week after removal. This process is modeled after that used by the Seattle Department of Transportation (SDOT) and would be required for removal and replacement 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. CERTIFY TREE SERVICE PROVIDERS.** Establish a registration and certification requirement for all tree service providers working on trees on private property in Seattle. This would use the existing, successful model currently applied to street trees and would help ensure high-quality, knowledgeable tree care professionals are tending our urban forest.



**3. REPLACE SIGNIFICANT TREES.** Future generations should get to enjoy a tree-filled city like we do. By requiring replacement for any Significant Tree (those with a trunk six inches in diameter or greater) removed, this recommendation helps ensure inter-generational equity. The UFC recommends that replacement trees should reach a canopy volume in 25 years that is equivalent to the canopy volume lost. Replacement can take place on site or people can pay a fee-in-lieu for trees to be planted elsewhere in the city. Those fees would flow into a City-established Tree Replacement and Preservation Fund, which should also be able to accept fines, donations, grants, and to set up easements.



**4. TRACK CHANGES IN THE URBAN FOREST.** Create a tracking system for tree loss and replacement in a citywide database as part of the permitting process. The data will allow the city to better manage the urban forest and to satisfy public inquiry about legal tree removal through an online system.



**5. PROTECT EXCEPTIONAL TREES, GROVES, AND TREES ON UNDEVELOPED LOTS.** Exceptional 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 that the upper threshold for the largest Exceptional Trees be lowered from 30 to 24 inches in diameter or greater. Groves provide significant, essential 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 significant tree on undeveloped lots.



**6. ENCOURAGE TREE RETENTION ON ALREADY DEVELOPED LOTS.** Reduce the number of tree removals allowed to be no more than two significant non-exceptional trees in three years per lot outside development. Current code allows removal of three such trees per year, a rate that could quickly clear all trees on a lot. The proposed change recognizes and appreciates the benefits urban trees provide.



**7. FUND AND ENFORCE.** In order for any updated tree protection ordinance to be successful, all elements must be appropriately resourced, including improved enforcement. This must be accommodated in the City budget.

### WANT TO CONTRIBUTE? YOUR IDEAS MAKE A DIFFERENCE!

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](mailto:Sandra.Pinto_de_Bader@seattle.gov) by December 31, 2019.