

# Summary of Public Input to the Draft 2020 Urban Forest Management Plan (UFMP)

February 2, 2021 v2

As part of the public input phase of the City’s 2020 UFMP update, the urban forestry team created an online input form to gather public comment. The City received 165 responses to the survey with 89 participants providing specific details. The team also received 13 direct emails from residents and organizations such as Seattle Green Spaces Coalition, Green Cities, TreePAC, and Laurelhurst Community Club, and University of Washington.

The team discussed all input in detail and produced the summary below and recommendations to be reviewed by City leadership. The first table with high-level input, shows at the top the comments that were incorporated into the next iteration of the draft plan in response to public input. The second table shows the detailed input from the Urban Forestry Commission and the changes made to the plan input as well as response to input that was not incorporated. All the input and comments received have been posted [here](#) for transparency.

The online form gathered demographic information, with the following results:

- 17% - no response
- 8% - other (with no meaningful input regarding race)
- 65% - white
- 10% - BIPOC (African American, Asian, Latinx, or mix)

## High-level input:

Comment theme	Initial staff response
Plan structure (UW) Include an Executive Summary within the Plan text to let people choose how much to read before getting to goals, strategies, actions.	<u>Changes made in response to public input:</u> Added a Plan Roadmap section at the end of Chapter One. There will also be an Executive Summary provided as a separate document.
Plan content (various) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Add a map for management units.</li> <li>- Expand benefits of trees section and add citations.</li> <li>- Add more information about Urban Forestry Commission’s work under Existing Programs section.</li> <li>- Mention invasives on private property under Green Seattle Partnership section.</li> <li>- Action agenda and key performance indicators are not accountable.</li> <li>- Add to challenges section that there is poor coordination with other state and federal jurisdictions and among City departments. Mention</li> </ul>	<u>Changes made in response to public input:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Added graphics and map in the management units section.</li> <li>- Expanded the benefits section.</li> <li>- Added more information about the Urban Forestry Commission and a link.</li> <li>- Added paragraph under GSP section.</li> <li>- Added clarifying statement that accountability is built into departmental workplans.</li> <li>- Added action #10 on enhanced coordination with other agencies/institutions/landowners.</li> </ul>

Comment theme	Initial staff response
<p>SDOT, Corps of Engineers, UW, schools, or action on coordination between landowners such as institutions, county, state, Port, and federal agencies (SGSC).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Add date in which tree regulations were enacted on timeline. Add dates previous to colonization. Include more thorough discussion of Indigenous forest management.</li> <li>- Green Cities study is old and now unreliable (especially the replacement value of \$4.99B).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The project team agreed that significant effort would be needed to re-do this section right and agreed to remove it.</li> <li>- Unfortunately, this is the only data we have. Very expensive to update. Core Team believes it is still relevant.</li> </ul>
<p>Goals, Strategies, Actions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Goals are not SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, and Timely).</li> <li>- Move Action 18 to top and bold (UFC and others).</li> <li>- Add priority actions from 2013 plan.</li> </ul>	<p><u>Changes made in response to public input:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Changed term “goals” to Outcomes.</li> <li>- Bolded the action and moved to the top of Strategy 7 section.</li> <li>- Kept language as is. Project team was purposeful on keeping the 2020 update succinct. Proposed plan has updated priority actions.</li> </ul>
<p>Tree regulations related comments from TreePAC, SGSC, UFC, and others, included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Need to change footprint limits on single family lots.</li> <li>- Development practice to clear cut sites.</li> <li>- Include a tree removal permit system under the plan’s management units’ section.</li> <li>- SDCI has conflict of interest leading the tree ordinance update.</li> <li>- UFMP assumes developer profit is highest and best use w/o balance for forest ecosystem health and integrity.</li> <li>- Administrations ignore Urban Forestry Commission recommendations around tree regulations.</li> <li>- The plan needs to be strengthened to more aggressively protect existing trees.</li> <li>- Council could use fees and fines from tree regulations to pay for tree maintenance.</li> <li>- Require ratio of trees per resident during development.</li> <li>- Plan should attach cost of tree loss due to development.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Shared comments with SDCI/OSE team</li> <li>- Specifics of tree regulations is not part of the UFMP update scope</li> </ul>
<p>Comments related to current urban forestry work included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Centralize urban forestry management</li> <li>- Increase the extent of the urban forest</li> <li>- Focus City resources on tree care</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Core Team shared comments with specific program staff</li> <li>- Core Team felt this input is too detailed for UFMP update scope</li> </ul>

Comment theme	Initial staff response
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Fund SDOT’s inventory</li> <li>- OSE should inventory private trees</li> <li>- Trees for Seattle is not able to enforce tree protection or policy</li> <li>- Promote the Heritage Tree program</li> <li>- Disclose urban forestry budgets (SGSC)</li> <li>- Make staff meetings public (SGSC)</li> <li>- Add back the urban wildlife position (cut in 1980s)</li> <li>- Perform economic impacts assessment from tree loss</li> <li>- Various tree data-related comments: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Critique to 2016 LiDAR protocol</li> <li>- Do a complete tree inventory with a searchable database</li> <li>- Tree assessment methods are subjective and lack metrics to comply with Auditor’s recommendations</li> <li>- Include canopy volume as measure (various)</li> <li>- Draft UFMP doesn’t require scientific data (SGSC )</li> <li>- UFMP fails to pair aerial photography with on-the-ground assessments (SGSC )</li> <li>- Recommend Google AI and Google Earth Engine to plant tree planting</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p>Include tree removal in key metrics (including SDCI numbers).</p>	
<p>General</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Concern that equity issues might take precedence over environment issues(various).</li> <li>- Comprehensive Plan has no short-term urban forestry goals or metrics (SGSC).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Core Team believes the UFMP addresses both equity AND environmental goals. Communities that experience highest level of environmental impacts are in equity priority areas.</li> <li>- The Comp Plan is meant to be a high-level document. Short-term urban forestry goals and metrics belong in the UFMP.</li> </ul>

Urban Forestry Commission specific input.

The Urban Forestry Commission (UFC) was established to advise the Mayor and City Council on plans, policies, and regulations having to do with Seattle’s urban forest. The UFC’s membership is highly technical, with thirteen positions that include wildlife biologist, urban ecologist, university representative, arborist, landscape architect, NGO representative, development community representative, realtor, Get Engaged Member, environmental justice, public health, and community/neighborhood representative. The UFC membership includes representatives from throughout the community. The table below includes specific input provided by the UFC in their [letter of recommendation](#) dated December 9, 2020.

Comment	Response
Narrative around the urban forest is often that of “trees vs.”—trees vs. density, trees vs. freight, trees vs. views, etc. Language reinforces false dichotomy.	Core Team (CT) discussed and agreed that UF practice sometimes does require balancing multiple priorities. This is indeed hard but necessary and it’s CT’s job to make it happen and find creative solutions.
Use the term “environmental justice priority communities” but adding “with an emphasis on Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) communities” throughout the document	CT agreed to make this change.
Incentives identified on the draft Plan page 27 include stormwater rates. However, the text references only land cover, which may be jargon for the Plan’s public audience. The UFC recommends explicitly mentioning trees as an opportunity to clearly connect our urban forests and the stormwater benefits they provide.	The UFMP does mention trees specifically as a stormwater runoff reduction tool.
On page 28, the draft Plan enumerates positive statements for the future urban forest. Since these statements do not follow the SMART formulation typical of goals in management or strategic plans, the UFC recommends against calling them “goals.” The UFC suggests restructuring the statements to read as a list of vision statements, desired outcomes, or values.	CT agreed to use the term Outcomes instead of Goals.
The list page 28 in the draft Plan does not contain a statement regarding the City’s vision. For example, “Trees in Seattle’s urban forest are of diverse species and ages and both the urban forest’s canopy cover and canopy volume are expanding in all management units across the city.”	CT felt that outcomes and indicators were together the best statement of our vision. It was felt that trying to consolidate them into a single sentence would not be helpful.
The UFC is concerned about setting “Balancing competing priorities” as a goal and proposes adding the following language to the beginning of Goal 6: <i>The City will grow, maintain, preserve, enhance, and restore its urban forest as it meets other priorities</i>	CT modified Outcome 6 to read: The City will <i>work to</i> grow, maintain, preserve, enhance, and restore its urban forest as it meets other priorities.
The UFC recommends rephrasing the strategies on page 29 to be more specific and actionable. Specific recommendations include: - Strategy # 2: Current: “Prepare for climate impacts and build a resilient urban forest.” Suggestion: “Evaluate potential climate change impacts and identify forest management actions that increase the urban forest’s resilience (or adaptive capacity) to those impacts.” - Strategy # 3:	Strategy #2 new language: “Identify and implement forest management actions that increase the urban forest’s resilience to potential impacts, including climate change.”  Strategy #3: CT agreed not to include this language suggestion since it substantially limits the original concept. The original language focused broadly on understanding the urban forest

Comment	Response
<p>Current: “Understand the condition and complexity of the urban forest as a resource, how it was different in the past, and how it may change in the future.”</p> <p>Suggestion: “Support research that evaluates the condition and complexity of the urban forest over time to better understand historical changes and potential future trajectory.”</p> <p>- Strategy # 7: Current: “Regulate and provide support to the community for keeping, removing, replacing, and planting trees.” Suggested: “Strengthen, fund, and enforce tree regulations on private property and support the community for keeping, removing, replacing, and planting trees.”</p>	<p>and the suggested language focused on research efforts. Additionally, the plan already includes a research agenda to focus on this topic.</p> <p>Strategy language to remain as is.</p> <p>Strategy #7 new language: Provide support to the community, via incentives and regulations, for keeping, removing, replacing, and planting trees.” This strategy is not just about regulations, but is also about incentives</p>
<p>The UFC is encouraged by the City’s commitment to core urban forest efforts (outlined on page 30):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Planting trees throughout Seattle and complying with the City’s Two-for-One tree replacement policy.</li> <li>• Developing plans and strategies to manage the urban forest on City natural landscapes and properties.</li> <li>• Removing invasive plants from Seattle’s forested areas.</li> <li>• Coordinating departmental work and collaborating on urban forestry citywide efforts.</li> <li>• Updating initiatives and regulations in support of Seattle’s urban forest.</li> </ul> <p>UFC suggests mentioning in the body of the plan prior to the Action Agenda. Could mention in Chapter 3 and then again before action agenda.</p>	<p>CT discussed and agreed to keep the language as is since this issue is already addressed in Chapter 3.</p>
<p>The UFC makes the following comments on the Plan’s Action Agenda, pages 31-32:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strategy 1. Add action: “Identify barriers to tree planting and maintenance in environmental equity priority communities and develop policies to address those barriers.”</li> <li>• Strategy 2, Action #5. Replace “vulnerability assessment” with “vulnerability assessment and adaptation plan” and consider replacing the word “resiliency” with “adaptive capacity.”</li> </ul>	<p>Strategy #1. CT agreed to modify the language in Action #4 instead of adding a new action.</p> <p>Strategy #2, Action #5: CT decided the vulnerability assessment will be the actionable item. An adaptation plan suggests a large document which would require additional planning and delay implementation. The CT decided to keep term resiliency.</p>

Comment	Response
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Strategy 3. Add action: "Track tree loss and replacement on public and private lands."</li> <li>Strategy 7, Action #15. Consider, "Develop strategies to help property owners remove invasive plants and pests on private land either through developing new programs or volunteer opportunities or by communicating existing resources and programs."</li> <li>Strategy 7, Action #18. Bold it and move it up to the top of Strategy 7</li> </ul>	<p>Strategy #3: This action is not currently possible. It would require permits for all tree removal and all tree planting. Tree loss and replacement is already being done in public lands.</p> <p>Strategy 7, Action #15: Team will keep "exploring" since development of strategies is not currently funded. The second piece is too prescriptive at this point.</p> <p>Strategy 7, Action #18: Moved up and bolded.</p>
Key Activity Metrics: add tree loss and tree removal tracking across the city.	Added tree removal to the Two-for-One reporting.
Consider a canopy volume metric, as opposed to just using canopy coverage.	CT agreed to research using volume as a metric as part in next Lidar study.
Add bird and other wildlife monitoring to canopy connectivity indicator.	SPR is working with partners to coordinate monitoring.