



Julia Michalak (Position #1 – Wildlife Biologist), Co-chair
Joshua Morris (Position #7 – NGO), Co-Chair
Elby Jones (Position #2 – Urban Ecologist - ISA) • **Weston Brinkley** (Position #3 – University)
Stuart Niven (Position #5 – Arborist – ISA) • **David Moehring** (Position # 8 – Development)
Blake Voorhees (Position # 9 – Realtor) • **Jessica Hernandez** (Position #11 – Environmental Justice)
Jessica Jones (Position # 12 – Public Health)

January 5, 2022

Aja Hazelhoff and Patrice Carroll, OPCD
Seattle City Hall
600 4th Ave, 5th Floor
Seattle, WA 98124

RE: 2035 Seattle Comprehensive Plan Update

Dear Aja and Patrice,

Duwamish Lands (Seattle, WA) – The Urban Forestry Commission (UFC) appreciates your December 8th introduction to the Seattle Comprehensive Plan update process. As you noted in your presentation, this will not be an “update as usual,” given that our city continues to deal with the COVID pandemic, systemic racism, climate change, persistent housing crisis, and continuing rapid population growth.

All the factors that make this update process different intersect with urban forestry in important ways. **A protected, growing, and equitably distributed urban forest is essential for the City to live its core values of race and social justice, environmental stewardship, community, and economic opportunity and security.** That is why the UFC is prioritizing involvement in the Comprehensive Plan update process in its 2022 workplan and will encourage the Office of Planning and Community Development (OPCD) to integrate urban forestry protection and enhancement into all aspects of citywide and neighborhood planning.

With long-term, integrated planning, we can equitably grow the urban forest, and its immense benefits, alongside our growing population. We will also need good data. As mentioned by the Commission, Seattle’s tree canopy cover is expected to be reassessed this year in a manner directly comparable to 2016’s assessment, which found 28% canopy cover

30% Tree Canopy Cover?
Results

28%

28% of Seattle’s land is covered by tree canopy

91,776 - 38,271 = 53,505 this is the total land area without water
15,167 / 53,505 = 28% dividing the tree canopy area into the land area gives us the percent tree canopy cover

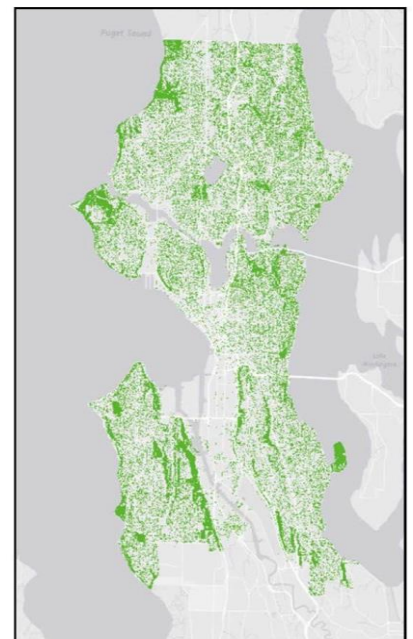


Figure 7. Tree Canopy at the city-scale derived from high-resolution imagery and LiDAR

UFC acknowledges the Coast Salish peoples of this land, the land which touches the shared waters of all tribes and bands within the Duwamish, Puyallup, Suquamish, Tulalip and Muckleshoot nations. As a commission, we are continuing our work to build strong and reciprocal relationships with the Indigenous lands and peoples of this city.

citywide (see image below). Soon, we may finally be able to determine with confidence how Seattle’s canopy is trending. The results should inform urban forestry goal setting in the updated Comprehensive Plan.

The UFC 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. We are eager to collaborate with the OPCD in the updates to the 2035 Comprehensive Plan in order to equitably increase Seattle’s tree canopy cover by an additional 7 to 10 percent within the next fifteen years in fulfillment of the Comprehensive Plan objectives.

We know that the tree canopy goals cannot be achieved within parks and rights-of-way alone. In fact, Table 1 within the 2016 canopy cover assessment (included below for reference) indicates that about two-thirds of the tree canopy is within private land. Creating a ‘roadmap’ to achieve the tree canopy equity and environmental objectives within the next fifteen years will require thoughtful planning. We understand that the OPCD may incorporate the 2016 Tree Assessment data into the Comprehensive Plan update in order to promote subsequent legislative considerations as advised by the UFC. For instance, given that the assessment targets 33% Single-Family (Neighborhood Residential) and 20% Multi-Family Residential canopy goals, the city will need to modify existing tree protection and planting requirements within those management units accordingly.

Management Unit	Land area (% of city)	2016 canopy cover	2037 canopy goal (set in 2007)	% contribution to city’s canopy cover
Single-Family Residential	56%	32%	33%	63%
Multi-family Residential	11%	23%	20%	9%
Commercial/Mixed-use	8%	14%	15%	4%
Downtown	1%	10%	12%	<1%
Industrial	11%	6%	10%	2%
Institutional	2%	25%	20%	2%
Developed Parks	4%	34%	25%	6%
Parks’ Natural Areas	7%	89%	80%	14%
City total	100%	28%	30%	100%
Right-of-way (runs through all other MUs)	27%	23%	24%	22%

Table 1. Percentage of city’s landmass,, current canopy cover, targets by MU and MU contribution to city’s canopy cover

As noted, the urban forest is important to the goals and values of the Comprehensive Plan. Likewise, the Comprehensive Plan has important implications for the urban forest. We acknowledge the relevance of the tree canopy growth as density and population grows and have included herein (without edits) the relevant Comprehensive Plan principles that should be maintained and strengthened to ensure a livable, healthy, and equitable Seattle within this and future decades. Therefore, the UFC is eager to be involved in this update.

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Please engage with the Commission often in 2022 as the Comprehensive Plan is updated. We invite you to present to us with each step of the process, and offer the UFC as a resource during your planning efforts. Given the importance of the Comprehensive Plan in driving urban forest policy, we expect to offer input regularly during the process and are available to participate in deliberative sessions to advance the update. We look forward to working with you on this important effort.

Sincerely,



Julia Michalak, Co-Chair



Josh Morris, Co-Chair



David Moehring



Stuart Niven

cc: Mayor Bruce Harrell, Council President Deborah Juarez, CM Lisa Herbold, CM Andrew Lewis, CM Tammy Morales, CM Teresa Mosqueda, CM Sara Nelson, CM Alex Pedersen, CM Kshama Sawant, CM Dan Strauss, Michelle Caulfield, Sharon Lerman, Urban Forestry Management Team, Urban Forestry Core Team, Rico Quirindongo

Urban Forest references from the 2035 Seattle Comprehensive Plan

Glossary Term; “urban forest”

The trees and lower-growing plants that are found on public and private property within the city. This includes developed parks and natural areas, as well as the trees along streets and in yards. (p. 199)

Policies

GS 3.1 Encourage the preservation, protection, and restoration of Seattle’s distinctive natural features and landforms such as bluffs, beaches, streams, and remaining evergreen forests. (p. 33)

P 3.4 Enhance wildlife habitat by restoring forests and expanding the tree canopy on City owned land.

Built Environment

GS 3.8 Encourage the preservation and expansion of the tree canopy throughout the city for the aesthetic, health and environmental benefits trees provide, considering first the residential and mixed-

use areas with the least tree canopy in order to more equitably distribute the benefits to residents. (p. 34)

LU 5.8 Establish tree and landscaping requirements that preserve and enhance the City's physical and aesthetic character and recognize the value of trees and landscaping in addressing stormwater management, pollution reduction, heat island mitigation, and other issues. (p. 47)

LU 6.13 Limit parking in City parks to discourage the use of park land for parking; where there is a demonstrated need for parking, design parking facilities in ways that preserve open space, green space, and trees and other mature vegetation. (p. 50)

T 4.2 Enhance the public street tree canopy and landscaping in the street right-of-way. (p. 86)

Goal

U G4 Coordinate right-of-way activities among departments to meet transmission, distribution, and conveyance goals; to minimize the costs of infrastructure investment and maintenance; to manage stormwater; and to support other uses such as transportation, trees, and public space. (p. 121)

EN 1.2 Strive to increase citywide tree canopy *coverage to 30 percent by 2037 and to 40 percent over time.* (p. 133)

EN 1.3 Use trees, vegetation, green stormwater infrastructure, amended soil, green roofs, and other lowimpact development features to meet drainage needs and reduce the impacts of development.

EN 1.5 Promote sustainable management of public and private open spaces, trees, and vegetation by preserving or planting native and naturalized vegetation, removing invasive plants, improving soil health, using integrated pest management, and engaging the community in long-term stewardship activities.

EN 1.7 Promote the care and retention of trees and groups of trees that enhance Seattle's historical, cultural, recreational, environmental, and aesthetic character. (p. 133)

Environmental Policies

R-EP1 Protect and enhance the urban forest on public and private property to reduce storm runoff, absorb air pollutants, reduce noise, stabilize soil, and provide habitat. (p. 389)

Patti Bakker, Interim Urban Forestry Commission Coordinator
City of Seattle, Office of Sustainability & Environment
PO Box 94729 Seattle, WA 98124-4729 Tel: 206-684-3194
www.seattle.gov/UrbanForestryCommission