



# Seattle Urban Forestry Commission 2019 Annual Report

## Introduction

2019 marked the 10<sup>th</sup> year of the Urban Forestry Commission (UFC) continuing its mandate to advise the Mayor and City Council on policies and regulations governing the protection, management, and planting of trees and vegetation in the City of Seattle.

The Tree and Urban Forest Protection Ordinance update, an effort ten years in the making, continued to be at the forefront of the UFC's efforts. The UFC also issued recommendations on a range of topics 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 2019 the UFC's primary objectives were to:

- Support the City's Tree and Urban Forest Protection Ordinance update effort
- Provide input to the implementation of the [Executive Order 2017-11: Tree Protection](#)
- Engage City Departments on the [Urban Forest Management Plan update](#) process
- Increase outreach and engagement with the public and City staff, and
- Advise the City on decisions that impact the 30% canopy cover goal.



## UFC 2019 Accomplishments

### Tree Regulation Ordinance Update

Per City Council request, the UFC edited Council's [D7 version of the Tree Regulations Updates Ordinance](#) and produced a [new version of the Tree and Urban Forest Protection Ordinance](#) providing significant feedback resulting in seven key recommendations:

- Expand permit program
- Certify tree service providers
- Replace significant trees
- Track changes in the urban forest
- Protect exceptional trees, groves, and trees on undeveloped lots
- Encourage tree retention on already developed lots, and
- Fund and enforce tree protection regulations.



The UFC encouraged Seattle residents to provide input on this new version of the Ordinance. More than 500 Seattle residents have reached out to the UFC expressing their support for their recommendations and urging the City to move forward with the regulations update. All these communications can be found at the bottom of the UFC's Resources [page](#).

The UFC created a [one-pager](#) with information on the tree regulations update to provide background and emphasizing key ways to protect Seattle's urban forest.





### UFC Recommendations:

Along with input to the draft ordinance, the UFC issued the following letters of recommendation related to tree protection:

- [Letter](#) thanking Mayor and Council for adopting [Resolution 31902](#) – Development and Implementation of a Revised Tree Ordinance (November 13)
- [Letter to the Mayor](#) about Updating the Tree Protection Ordinance (September 4)
- [Letter about tree protection inside the MHA Ordinance](#) (January 9)
- [Follow up recommendation](#) Amending SMC 25.11.090 in MHA Ordinance (February 6)
- [Letter](#) about MHA Ordinance Amendments and Draft Companion Resolution (March 13)

## Mandatory Housing Affordability (MHA)



The UFC supported Seattle Parks and Recreation’s (SPR) work with the following letters:

- Cheasty Mountain Bike and Pedestrian Trail [Pilot Project. \(March 6\)](#)
- Green Seattle Partnership [\(GSP\) funding levels](#) (October 9). On October 18, the [Mayor responded](#) to the UFC letter.
- On November 13, the UFC issued a GSP funding [follow up letter](#) with Superintendent Aguirre’s [responding](#) on November 25.

## Cheasty Mountain Bike/Pedestrian Trail Pilot Project

The UFC is looking forward to remaining involved in this important conversation as SPR’s responds to Council’s [Statement of Legislative](#)

[Intent SPR6A2](#) by providing a progress report on GSP.

The UFC continued to encourage community members and groups to share their ideas. SDOT and the community group Recharge the Battery participated in a creative discussion around the decommissioning of the Battery Street Tunnel.



The UFC issued a [letter](#) on January 2 encouraging the City to consider the significant future potential of the six city blocks involved and the West Battery Portal site to support the urban forest in one of Seattle’s most dense neighborhoods. The UFC was pleased to see that the City allocated funding for a feasibility study for a park.

Friends of Discovery Park shared their effort to create a vegetation management platform to help the City with maps that would provide a holistic view of the parks’ condition to inform planning and decision-making. The UFC issued a [letter of support](#) for this work on March 6.

### UFC Discussions:

The UFC welcomes community members, organizations, and City Departments to engage in opportunities for discussion and UFC feedback. The UFC thanks City of Seattle staff for their partnership and willingness to spend time with the UFC. In 2019 the UFC continued this tradition to build partnerships and stay abreast of relevant subjects.

City Departments and Programs/ Projects: in preparation for their annual meeting with the City’s Urban Forest





Interdepartmental Team, the UFC had briefings and discussions on departmental programs and budgets with the Office of Planning and Community Development, Seattle City Light, Seattle Department of Transportation, Seattle Public Utilities, Seattle Parks and Recreation, Seattle Department of Construction and Inspections, and the Office of Sustainability & Environment. This was especially helpful in 2019 as we had a number of new UFC members.

Other programs discussed with the UFC included: SDCI's Design Review Program; Seattle Parks and Recreation's Strategic Plan; SDOT's cost-effective walkways; Trees for Seattle; and the Yesler Terrace Redevelopment project.

Community groups: besides discussions with Recharging the Battery and Friends of Discovery Park, the Seattle Green Spaces Coalition shared its accomplishments and invited the UFC to support the City's Natural Capital Assessment effort.

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

The Commission and the Urban Forest Interdepartmental Team (IDT) held their 9<sup>th</sup> annual meeting at the Rainier Beach Community Center. The meeting goals were to strengthen the partnership between the Urban Forestry



Commission and the Urban Forest Interdepartmental Team in order to accomplish the goals of the Urban Forest Management Plan (UFMP); to understand the complexities of urban forestry work on the ground; share examples of good work; and discuss challenges.

This year's meeting included a 1.3-mile tour of departmental urban forestry work on the ground which gave departments an opportunity to showcase examples of good work with the Commission as well as talk about challenges Seattle's trees face in our urban environment.

### Commission Membership

Weston Brinkley was re-elected as Chair for 2019 with Sandra Whiting and then Steve Zemke serving as Vice-Chairs.

The Commission welcomed five new members in 2019:

- Elby Jones - Position#2 (Urban Ecologist)
- Joshua Morris - Position#7 (NGO Representative)
- Steven Fry - Position#8 (Development Representative)
- Blake Voorhees – Position #9 (Financial Advisor, Economist, or Realtor)
- Neeyati Johnson - Position #10 (Get Engaged member)

The Commission wants to thank departing members Sandra Whiting (Position # 2 – Urban Ecologist); Joanna Nelson de Flores (Position #7 – NGO Representative); Andrew Zellers (Position #8 – Development Community or utility Representative); Craig Johnson (Position #9 – Financial Advisor, Economist, Realtor); and Bonnie Lei (Position #10 – Get Engaged) for their many contributions to the Commission's work in 2019.

### Conclusion

In 2019 the UFC marked the end of its first decade of work with what was perhaps the most impactful year yet. Many ongoing critically important policies and plans were implemented or took major steps forward this year. These included multi-





year efforts on the vegetation components of the Mandatory Housing Affordability code, implementation of Executive Order 2017-11, and the update to the City’s Urban Forest Management Plan.

Most significantly substantial progress was made on the Tree and Urban Forest Protection Ordinance update. In all the UFC issued more than a dozen letters of recommendation in 2019. The UFC sees this trend of progress continuing into next year.

For 2020 we look forward to seeing a revised Tree and Urban Forest Protection Ordinance passed, and will be eagerly awaiting work on implementation, management, and tracking of its success. The UFC will also be focusing on the climate crisis and integration of forestry with Seattle’s Climate Action Plan and Green New Deal.

Lastly, the UFC would like to thank the Office of Sustainability & Environment for their continued support by providing staff time to assist the UFC in carrying out its important work.

**Contact:**

Additional information about the Urban Forestry Commission visit the Commission’s [website](#), or by contacting:

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**Urban Forestry  
 Commission Mailing List**

To keep track of UFC activity, please join the mailing list. You will receive notices of agendas, meeting minutes, and copies of any recommendations or other documents created by the Commission.

**2019 Urban Forestry Commission**

Weston Brinkley, Chair  
 Position #3—University Representative

Steve Zemke, Vice-Chair  
 Position #1—Wildlife Biologist

Sandra Whiting, Vice-Chair/Elby Jones  
 Position #2—Urban Ecologist

Sarah Rehder  
 Position #4—Hydrologist

Stuart Niven  
 Position #5—Arborist

Michael Walton  
 Position #6—Landscape Architect

Joanna Nelson de Flores/Joshua Morris  
 Position #7—NGO Representative

Andrew Zellers/Steven Fry  
 Position #8—Development Community

Craig Johnson/Blake Voorhees  
 Position #9—Realtor

Bonnie Lei/Neeyati Johnson  
 Position #10—Get Engaged

Whitman Bouton  
 Position #11—Environmental Justice

Jessica Jones  
 Position #12—Public Health

Shari Selch  
 Position #13—Community/Neighborhood

