



City of Seattle
Urban Forestry Commission

Alicia Kellogg (Position 2 – Urban Ecologist) • **Becca Neumann** (Position 4 – Hydrologist)
David Baker (Position 8 – Development) • **Nathan Collins** (Position 9 – Financial Analyst)
Timothy Randazzo (Position 10 – Get Engaged) • **Jessica Jones** (Position 12 – Public Health)
Lia Hall (Position 13 – Community/Neighborhood)

The Urban Forestry Commission 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.

Draft meeting notes

February 12, 2025, 3:00 – 5:00 p.m.
Via Webex meeting and in-person at the
Seattle Municipal Tower, Room 1872 (18th floor)
700 5th Avenue, Seattle

(206) 207-1700
Meeting number: 2503 580 2233
Meeting password: 1234

Attending

Commissioners

Alicia Kellogg
Lia Hall
David Baker
Nathan Collins
Timothy Randazzo

Guest

Sharon Lerman - OSE

Public

Steve Zemke
Nancy Lee

Absent

Jessica Jones
Becca Neumann

Staff

Lauren Urgenson – OSE
Evelyn Shapiro - Consultant

NOTE: Meeting notes are not exhaustive. For more details, listen to the digital recording of the meeting at: <https://www.seattle.gov/urbanforestrycommission/meetingdocuments>

Call to order:

Amy Burtaine called the meeting to order, conducted a roll call of the commissioners and reviewed the agenda.

Public Comment:

Steve Zemke expressed concern about whether or not the city of Seattle will have the funds that were pledged from the federal government for planting trees. He added that some other cities online have noted that the funds have been cut.

Steve also gave an example of continuing problems with the tree service provider registration process. He talked about hearing chainsaws in his neighborhood and when he went to investigate, he found no signs that they were approved to do this work and then in talking with the people it turned out they took their approval to be from the builder / the development permit approval. He noted the arborists did not get approval in terms of posting the three day posting online and it turned out the person was not registered with the city. Steve talked about his frustration with trying to get in touch with the city because the line was closed and there was no way to leave a message when he tried to call. Steve encouraged others when they heard chain saws in their neighborhood to go check it out.

UFC Commissioner and Liaison updates

Timothy Randazzo Updates:

Get Engaged Program Applications Open:

- The next cohort is now accepting applications.
- Encouraged attendees to share the opportunity with young people interested in serving on boards/commissions.
- A link was shared for applications, and Timothy is open to connecting with interested individuals. Application Link: <http://forms.office.com/r/i8exu5Viwn>

Upcoming Events & Outreach:

- The program will have a table at the YMCA's **Level Up 2025** life skills and resource fair for young adults.
- Great opportunity for outreach about commission work and urban forestry.

Past and Ongoing Engagements:

- Participated in recent career fairs and a climate workforce conference.
- Actively mentoring youth and promoting public sector involvement.

Future Plans:

- Planning to lead an **urban forestry tour** with their cohort when the weather improves.
- Will incorporate discussions on Seattle's urban forestry plans, equity, and community impacts of tree canopy.

- Interested in having another commissioner join as a guest speaker to talk about urban forestry history.

Follow-Up:

- Will provide updates and potentially present the tour to the commission in the future.

Liaison Lauren Urgenson Updates

Commissioner Updates

- **Seven commissioners** have been approved by the Land Use Committee and City Council.
 - They will officially join the Urban Forestry Commission (UFC) starting at the May meeting.
 - Onboarding is being supported by consultant Evelyn Shapiro and will include both new and existing commissioners.

Staffing & Support

- **Amy** will be working with the team for the next few months, providing meeting support and partnership.
- **New temporary position** available: *Board & Commission Liaison* (posting open through **April 22**).
 - Will support both the UFC and the Sweetened Beverage Tax Community Advisory Board.
 - Role is part of the Office of Sustainability and Environment (OSE).

Federal Funding & the Foresting Seattle Program

- Seattle finalized a **\$12 million contract with the U.S. Forest Service** in July 2024 to support the *Foresting Seattle* program.
 - It's a 5-year initiative led by OSE and Seattle Parks, with citywide urban forestry collaboration.
 - Funds had been frozen temporarily and are now active again.

Three Focus Areas of the Program:

1. **Neighborhood Urban Forestry Teams**
 - Focus on **Beacon Hill** and **Chinatown–International District**.
 - Community-driven urban forestry planning and planting.
2. **Youth Workforce Development**
 - Partnering with Seattle Parks' **Youth Green Corps**.
 - Multiple cohorts will focus on urban forestry, parks, and restoration career pathways.

3. **Natural Area Stewardship**

- Collaboration with Seattle Housing Authority and Seattle Public Schools (esp. **Rising Star School** in Beacon Hill).
 - In partnership with **Mountains to Sound Greenway Trust** and **ECOSS**.
 - Expands stewardship beyond parks to adjacent forest lands (e.g., school and housing authority properties).
 - Also extends natural areas restoration on adjacent Seattle Parks property in beacon Hill.
 - The program builds on the **Green Seattle Partnership** model but expands its reach.
- Lauren expressed excitement about progress and future collaboration with the UFC.

Urban forestry budget background presentation (Sharon Lerman, Healthy Communities Director, OSE)

Background & Context

- This presentation was in response to a **UFC request** for an overview of how the **City of Seattle funds urban forestry**.
- Urban forestry work is spread across **9 city departments**, making it hard to consistently track funding.
- The data presented is based on the **2024 endorsed budget** (collected in 2023), and is the most comprehensive recent dataset available.
- The City's urban forestry strategy is grounded in the **Urban Forest Management Plan (UFMP)**, which emphasizes equity, resilience, cross-departmental coordination, and community partnership.

Urban Forestry Budget Breakdown (~\$25M total, 2024 endorsed)

1. Direct Management (~\$20M)

- Largest portion of funding.
- Activities: tree pruning, planting, storm response, pest/disease management, restoration.
- Primarily on city-managed lands: parks, rights-of-way, utilities.
- **Main departments:** Seattle City Light, SDOT, Seattle Parks, SPU.

2. Policy & Planning (~\$3M)

- Focuses on both citywide strategy and departmental integration.
- Includes: canopy assessments, tree code, UFMP, capital planning.
- **Departments involved:** SDCI, SDOT, Parks, OSE.

3. Community Outreach (~\$2M)

- Education, engagement, volunteer programs, communications.
- Programs like Trees for Neighborhoods and Seattle Forest Week.
- Significant outreach from Parks (Green Seattle Partnership), SPU, and OSE.

Departmental Roles & Investments

- **Seattle City Light:** Major investment in direct tree management (e.g., utility lines).
- **SDOT:** Tree permitting and right-of-way tree care.
- **Seattle Parks:** Tree care, restoration, volunteer programs.
- **SPU:** Outreach-heavy programs like Trees for Neighborhoods.
- **SDCI:** Focused on policy & regulation (tree code).
- **OSE:** Planning, coordination, outreach.
- **Seattle Center, OPCD, FAS:** Smaller-scale urban forestry roles.

Recent Additions Since 2024 Endorsed Budget

Not yet fully tracked citywide, but some known 2025 updates include:

- **One Seattle Tree Nursery** (\$680K total funding).
- **Urban Forestry Communications Strategy** (one-time development effort).
- **Climate Impact Data & Reporting** for urban forestry.
- **Expanded Canopy Equity Plan funding** for outreach/engagement.

Lia Hall asked whether tree inspections or permitting activities (like for tree cutting) conducted by SDCI would be considered direct management in the urban forestry budget breakdown.

Sharon Lerman replied that those activities are not considered direct management. All regulatory functions—including development, implementation, permitting, and enforcement of tree-related regulations—are categorized under policy and planning.

[UFC past budget recommendations \(L. Urgenson, Urban Forestry Policy and Programs Manager and Interim UFC liaison, OSE\)](#)

Urban Forestry Commission Budget Recommendations (2023–2024)

Recommendation Timeline:

- **Two budget recommendation letters/year:**
 - **First:** Sent in spring/summer to the **Mayor's office** ahead of the proposed budget.
 - **Second:** Sent in fall to **City Council**, reacting to the **Mayor's proposed budget**.

Key 2024 UFC Budget Recommendations (Recent Year)

- **Support for the Heritage Tree Program**
- **Increased SDCI enforcement staff** to support tree regulation
- **Explore creative funding** (e.g. tree bonds) to support tree protection during development
- **Additional SDOT staffing** to implement new tree planting requirements under **SMC 25.11**
- **Increased SDCI capacity**
- **Information request** on how tree fine revenues are allocated
- **Support for biannual budget reporting** (required by 2023 One Seattle Executive Order)
- **Maintain \$680K** to establish a **new tree nursery**
- **Preserve \$100K** for climate-related data mapping/integration
- **Funding for full inventory** of city-managed trees
- **Support for 3:1 tree replacement** policy implementation

Key 2023 Recommendations (Prior Year)

- **\$200K** for Tree Canopy Equity and Resilience Plan
- **\$5K** for community engagement
- **Increase UFC staff to 1 FTE**
- **2 new urban forestry staff at SDCI**
- **\$50K** for a communications strategy
- **\$50K** for natural capital assessment
- **Maintenance & evaluation support** for tree protection ordinance (SMC 25.11)
- **Request for \$250K** (increase from \$150K) for the Tree Canopy Equity Plan
- **\$60K** for a Tree Protection Ordinance Climate Task Force
- **Additional funding for tree planting & direct management**

What Got Funded (Per Lauren):

- Requests with **specific dollar amounts and clear justification** were more likely to succeed.
- **Funded Items:**
 - **\$30K additional** for Canopy Equity and Resilience Plan
 - **\$50K for communication strategy**
 - **\$680K for tree nursery** was maintained
 - Funding requests tied to existing budget frameworks had the best outcomes

Takeaways for Effective UFC Advocacy:

- **Specificity = Success** → Clear amounts tied to a program already in the budget process get results.
- **General values/statements** communicate various priorities but appear **less likely to result in immediate funding changes**.

- Mayor's office and City Council consider UFC requests within the **larger budget constraints, priority needs, and tradeoffs** of the city.

Presentations Q&A

Nathan Collins appreciated the budget history breakdown and the clarity on what types of recommendations have been most effective.

- Asked: **Is there an analysis comparing budget allocations to the number of trees managed by each department?**
- Response from Lauren & Sharon:
 - Some information exists, but not yet a clean per-tree or per-dollar breakdown.
 - Budget reporting starting in 2026 may offer deeper data.
 - Important to also consider the complexity and type of management (e.g., Seattle City Light has high-cost, specialized work around power lines).

Timothy Randazzo suggestions and questions:

- Onboarding Improvement:
 - Suggests **including budget history and outcomes in new commissioner onboarding.**
 - Recommends adding a **new "Outcome" column to the UFC budget recommendation table** (i.e., what was funded vs. not).
- Asked - How do the nine departments coordinate urban forestry work? Is it a cross-collaborative or top-down structure?
- Lauren's Response:
 - The Office of Sustainability & Environment (OSE) plays a connective/coordinating role.
 - Urban Forestry Core Team (staff from all departments) meets regularly to align strategy.
 - There is also a management-level team for coordination at the leadership level.
 - Coordination is guided by the Urban Forest Management Plan (UFMP) and Executive Orders.

Lia Hall requested **year-over-year budget trends across departments and programs to identify growth or contraction areas.**

- Sharon noted:
 - The April City Revenue Forecast (presented to Council) may help.
 - Sharon and Lauren will share the slide deck and council briefing link once posted.

David Baker asked for a **clear outline of the budget adoption process** and **public comment opportunities.**

- Lauren acknowledged the importance of this and can **follow up with materials** from Akshay's earlier presentation.

Next Steps / Recommendations

1. **Follow up on budget process & public engagement timeline** (Akshay's materials).
2. **Share citywide revenue forecast briefing** (April 2025) with commissioners.
3. **Consider adding an "Outcome" column** to past recommendation tables to show what was funded.
4. **Explore creating a report/dashboard** showing tree management costs vs. quantity by department (future reporting opportunity).
5. **Include this historical funding impact info in new commissioner orientation.**

UFC Commissioner discussion: budget questions and next steps

Key takeaways and highlights from this part of the discussion:

Budget Timeline & UFC Role

- April–June: Departments develop and submit budgets to the City Budget Office.
- May–June: UFC typically submits its first recommendation letter to the Mayor.
- September: Mayor proposes a citywide budget.
- October–Fall: UFC submits a second letter, now directed to City Council during their deliberations.
- The UFC's recommendations are intended to inform both the Mayor's and City Council's budget decisions.

Transparency & Access

- There's uncertainty about when department budget requests become publicly available.
- Lauren commits to looking into what is accessible and when.
- There's interest from commissioners in seeing more detailed departmental budget info, especially urban forestry-related line items, to better tailor recommendations.

Staff-Level Urban Forestry Vision

- Commissioners like Alicia and Timothy express curiosity about staff-level priorities, actions, and challenges—beyond what's reflected in high-level plans like the UFMP or Comprehensive Plan.
- Lauren mentions such info appears in both planning documents (e.g., SDOT levy plans) and annual departmental budgets, though it's dispersed.
- We can continue to support opportunities for UFC to connect with City staff if there's interest.

Comp Plan vs. Budget Process

- The Comprehensive Plan (Comp Plan) is described as a high-level guiding policy, but not always closely connected to actual line items in the budget.

- David raises a good point: because both the budget and Comp Plan are in motion this year, UFC might want to coordinate its comments or responses to both processes.

Working Outside Meetings (OPMA)

- There's enthusiasm for using tools like **Miro boards** for brainstorming and collaborative work (subcommittees, idea voting, etc.).
- Lauren flags that **OPMA constraints** make this tricky—any work that involves a quorum must happen in a **publicly accessible way**.
- If under a quorum (e.g., subgroups of 3–4), it's likely okay. Or, if the document is open to public view, it might also be permissible.
- Amy and Lauren agree to **follow up with legal** on how Miro boards or other tools could be used compliantly.

Possible Future Steps & Ideas

- Reviving or expanding subcommittees.
- Using tools like Miro as long as within OPMA limits.
- Earlier start to budget recommendations (possibly as early as January).
- Prioritizing communication with departments to better understand their on-the-ground needs.
- Specific interest raised in topics like:
 - Fee-in-lieu funds related to tree removal (David's question re: SDCI).
 - Illegal tree cutting and lack of response (Lia's comment).
 - Making sure recommendations get timely visibility (Alicia & Amy's notes).

Lauren asked commissioners to let her know if they'd like a **summary document, visual timeline**, or even a **draft of a UFC budget recommendation letter** started based on this convo. I can also help draft a list of key budget-related questions the UFC could send to departments!

Commissioner discussion: welcoming new Commissioners

Amy asked current commissioners **what would be helpful for onboarding** new members and asked what folks **wished they'd had**, or **still feel they need**, to be better supported in their role.

Lia:

- Emphasized the need for a **more fluid way to work together**.
- Recalled previous efforts under former OSC staff to **gain clarity on using public digital collaboration tools**, but said they hadn't received definitive answers.
- Implication: Better tools and transparency could ease onboarding and collaboration.

Lauren agreed this fits into a **broader set of discussions** with the UFC about commissioner workflow, priorities, and culture.

- Highlighted that with **seven new commissioners coming in**, there's a strong need for **intentional conversations and structures** to support collaboration.
- Mentioned Evelyn's involvement in those efforts.

Evelyn confirmed she's been **actively listening and taking notes** during the conversation.

- Sent out an email earlier that day to schedule **one-on-one conversations** with commissioners.
- These conversations will explore:
 - What folks **wish they'd had** during onboarding.
 - What made them feel **well or ill-equipped**.
 - Their **hopes and dreams** for the work.
- Expressed appreciation for the **experience and insight** of current commissioners.

Adoption of meeting notes

The meeting notes up for adoption were from the February meeting (2/2025). The meeting notes were approved by the commissioners present.

Public Comment

Steve Zemke offered comments on commissioner onboarding, policy, and broader context:

- Suggested creating a basic onboarding packet for new members.
 - Should include essential reading materials:
 - Tree Ordinance
 - Canopy Study
 - Urban Forest Management Plan
 - Recent slides showing tree financing
 - Emphasized that such resources weren't available when he joined, and would help new members be better prepared.
- Street Tree Maintenance:
 - Encouraged looking into city-led maintenance models—as done in other cities.
 - Suggested leveraging existing resources like Seattle City Light crews already doing some pruning work.
 - Recommended pricing out a cost model for the city to take over street tree care.
- Seattle Tree Fund:
 - Reiterated interest in a One Seattle Tree Fund (not yet seen).
 - Urged exploring models like Portland's, where corporate donors (e.g., Microsoft) can contribute.
- On-Call Staffing for Tree Complaints:
 - Proposed a rotating on-call staff model (similar to other professions).
 - Would avoid the need for 24/7 staffing while improving responsiveness.

Concerns About the Tree Protection Ordinance:

- Cited a conflict within the ordinance regarding the Basic Tree Protection Area:

- One section grants the director authority to adjust protection areas to save trees.
- Another section prohibits such changes.
- Called this contradiction a known issue that needs fixing.

Suggestions for Canopy Analysis:

- Requested future canopy studies include canopy volume, not just area:
 - A group of small trees might match the area of a few large trees, but impact is vastly different.
 - Volume would better reflect true ecological benefit.

Final Comment – Broader Political Context:

- Issued a personal call to action:
 - Urged commissioners to stay informed and engaged nationally—as federal policies deeply affect urban forest health.
 - Mentioned concerns about:
 - Increased coal production
 - Forest cuts
 - Funding threats to environmental and public services
 - Recommended checking out BlueSky and Apple News for updates on these issues.

Lauren took time to welcome **incoming commissioner Tristan Fields** who joined the meeting and will be in the landscape architecture position. Tristan is one of the few people in the whole nation that's a landscape architect and an arborist.

Adjourn:

The meeting was adjourned at 4:53

Meeting Chat:

Alicia Kellogg 4/9/2025 3:02 PM • I'm having some technical difficulties and can't hear anything, I'm going to restart my computer

Timothy R. (he/they) - Position 10 Get Engaged 4/9/2025 3:12 PM • Get Engaged Program 2025-26 Application Link: <http://forms.office.com/r/i8exu5Viwn>

Evelyn 4/9/2025 4:08 PM •

Timothy, I caught the end of your comment about ensuring that a piece of the budget explanation was included in commissioner onboarding, but not what you were specifying. What were you referring to specifically?

Timothy R. (he/they) - Position 10 Get Engaged 4/9/2025 4:09 PM • I was referring to the table of UFC recommendations that Lauren showed. I recommended a new column that confirms which UFC recommendations were actually funded or made an impact

Evelyn 4/9/2025 4:10 PM • Great, thank you

Laura 4/9/2025 4:19 PM •

As you think about the various roles of Seattle departments in managing our urban forest, what further questions do you have for departments about their urban forestry work?

From what you know about the City's urban forestry work, where do you see opportunities or gaps?

How might these inform potential budget recommendations?

steve zemke 4/9/2025 4:26 PM • More staffing to cover tree removal complaints on weekends and after hours. Maybe an on call position on the complaint line for after hours and weekends like other professionals have.

Lia 4/9/2025 4:26 PM • I would like to ask again for stronger enforcement and increased efforts for implementation of incentives for land owners to maintain and plant.

steve zemke 4/9/2025 4:29 PM • Put in place the One Seattle Tree Fund for getting donations for urban forestry from individuals and businesses like Portland has. I have not seen it posted anywhere or any funds going into it . Mayor Harrell said it would be created several years ago now.

steve zemke 4/9/2025 4:31 PM • Look at city taking over street tree maintenance as some other cities are doing to remove burden on property owners. SDOT and SCL already provide maintenance for many street trees.

steve zemke 4/9/2025 4:41 PM • Problem with non-public smaller meetings is that public can not follow what is going on, for example when positions are being drafted. Do not see why smaller meetings can not be public on line on webex like this meeting

Alicia Kellogg 4/9/2025 4:56 PM • Also recommend Robin Wall Kimmerer's new book The Serviceberry!