

## **Suggestions for Tree Protection and Stewardship in Seattle**

- from Annie Thoe, Seattle Victory Heights and Pinehurst neighbors

Trees represent the concept of Teamwork: community, peace, inclusion, protection, homes and habitat for all, survival and vitality. Need to shift in perspective from land use to land stewardship. Sustaining and planting more trees is one clear way to improve conditions for cleaner air, cool the planet, ensure our resources for building supplies, and connect communities.

- **City issue an immediate moratorium to declare any lots with native Trees and Exceptional trees over six inches in diameter as “Environmentally Sensitive”** category in order to protect lots from being clear cut, to protect our exception trees from our present zoning laws. This will halt the pace of illegal development that threatens our air quality from diminished old growth tree canopy, storm water issues,
- **Moratorium: Outlaw logging/clear cuts in the city for development immediately until a stronger policy to protect critical areas is in place – see above point. We need to re-think this fast-track development without providing adequate infrastructure, community impact, environmental impact, transportation issues and long-term impacts of density** (Cambridge, MA- just issued a moratorium this year in response to public outcry. Look at Chicago’s projects and density nightmare) In our neighborhood alone, we have **two more critical wooded lots that could be logged again- one by this same developer: 11344 23rd Ave NE. and the other is 2203 22nd Ave. NE.** Until a moratorium can be placed, uphold strict enforcement of the current policy that all trees over 6” diameter: *“No more than three non-exceptional trees six inches in diameter or greater may be removed one lot in any one-year period.”* - This current policy should be removed and is no longer working with our current situation and with global warming. 6-inch trees take 30 years to grow. We can’t afford or allow to lose any of these larger trees at this point.
- **Mandatory Review on development designs for minimum number of trees to be retained** e.g., at least three trees of significant diameter size (or what environmental consultants design) to ensure tree protection in residential neighborhoods, single family home zones least monitored in the city. Engage EPA and non-profit groups to help.
- **Storm water department can issue recommendations on properties in critical areas, declare areas critically environmentally sensitive** where mature trees need to be not only maintained, but what numbers of trees would be beneficial and **recommend planting trees to homeowners** who don’t currently have trees on their lots.
- **Neighborhoods or individual homeowners can petition zoning to declare their lot or areas of their neighborhood that contain large stands of native, exceptional and mature trees as “Environmentally sensitive”** to ensure we protect and foster old growth within the city for vitality for the future.
- **Easements once issued for a building permit currently cannot be withdrawn and need to be when permits threaten large trees.** Right now even with massive public complaints in this case with removing a perfectly healthy big tree, the developer has the right to remove a heritage tree if they’ve been granted easement. This needs to be changed to allow some public input and appeal.

from Urban Forestry Meeting 6/5/19 - (updated 6/10/19)

**Suggestions for Tree Protection and Stewardship (pg. 2)**

- **Arborists hired by developers make money to cut down trees and can be persuaded with the excuse that the tree is hazardous.** Any additional trees that developers want to cut have to have an **independent arborist selected by the city review any additional trees.** All trees must be marked before cutting and reviewed. **Neighbors should be notified as well** since any large tree removal greatly impacts the neighborhood and threatens health of their trees. The developer in this clear cut pressured a neighbor during the cutting process to cut a tree on the property line without getting a permit claiming it would die in two years anyway from the driveway they were constructing near it. There will always be some hazards with trees. But even worse hazards without trees— We need an **independent arborist** to review a building project without the developer present to intimidate the arborist. Make a fee for independent arborist review part of development application process.
- **Pruning versus Cutting.** Trees are disappearing faster than replaced. Pruning requires more expertise but gives arborists more work later and just as much or more money. Cutting, when unnecessary, stresses and can diminish or threaten the health of other trees. How do you replace trees that are 100 -130 feet tall quickly? this is a false claim that the canopy taken away can be replaced by a developer. This current development case would take over 100- 120 years.
- **We all pay for this! Short term and long term costs of tree removal need to be assessed by city prior** to permitting process of development. Costs to the consumer and city for waste management basement flooding, flooding and street damage from runoff, pollution to our streams from water runoff, drought and damage from lack of protection to neighboring plants, rising costs for higher temperatures and air conditioning, damage to neighboring trees, weakening trees. Costs of these developments are currently deferred to the neighbors and citizens. City Building Code Violations replied: "The developers have a right to make as much money as they can with their lots— but to whose expense?"
- **Larger signage in residential areas of project intentions.**The signage in this recent development was so small, practically hidden with no indication of clear-cutting. Signs should indicate when a large tree is going to be removed and reasoning so folks can be alerted. Removing these trees increases our temperature, reduced air quality, increase costs for cooling homes, kills other trees and native plants- not to mention wildlife that rely on shade, increase watering demands, basically depletes our infrastructure costs to the city and community well-being.
- **What avenues to stop developers who disobey the law? tree poachers?**  
Suspend or remove licensure, bigger fines. Retaining the tree itself probably pays much more than the fine. I called the Building Code Violations & Complaints for the City about this developer- Gamut360 who clear-cut this recent property and talked with the city employee Eddie Scott 206-233-7857 said this developer had all his permits approved to cut. He excused himself, saying he was new and checked with his supervisor who said "everything was fine." How is this possible?
- **Awards for designs/projects that work with retaining trees** and their impact on the environment. Let's have developers strive to do better with ecosystem design. Work with Universities to award better research and design for maximizing tree use, sustainability and green building that necessitates trees as part of the design and development.

from **Urban Forestry Meeting 6/5/19 - (updated 6/10/19)**

**Suggestions for Tree Protection and Stewardship (pg. 3)**

- **Steward policy for stewarding trees in every neighborhood - part of block watch, block parties.** Anytime sensitive habitat or trees over 6" are removed, developer or homeowner must replace the habitat removed or pay for city to replace it— again, that's a big tree to replace. How do we replace these big trees that took 30, 50, 100 years to grow?
- **Neighborhood involvement with tree monitoring for health, measuring, tending (ivy removal or other maintenance) and mapping trees in neighborhood** to raise awareness, bird counts— can engage interest in stewardship through block parties. Ranking neighborhoods for most tall trees, best bird habitat, best bee and butterfly, best native plants, Frog habitat, owl/raptor/hawk habitat, best "green" houses, best vegetable gardens and rooftop/container gardens
- **School programs: adopt a tree in your neighborhood for the year**, study about this type of tree and compare with others, change through season, which birds live there, etc. - can pair up with neighbors or non-profit education groups for interest in our local trees and habitat.
- **University programs:** more emphasis on research with urban forestry with effects of health and livability, community building, combat global warming, business attraction, tourism, habitat. Tracking tree loss and replacement. Tracking positive gains in areas of more tree density.
- **Engaging more local non-profit communities from environmental groups, garden groups, churches, social clubs, sporting groups, boy scouts, girl scouts, outdoor activity groups** to assist in their own ways of retaining, stewarding trees - cheering each other on. Mapping trees helps expand awareness and community. NYC has a tree map for birders at Central Park that is now a tourist attracting tool but can also be attractive for gardeners, designers, etc.
- **Awards for Businesses** get involved with tree preservation, rooftop gardens, tree-planting possibly work with Social Venture Partners – Seattle (SVP) to come up with incentives to encourage businesses to develop more around supporting tree habitats, protecting existing trees and planting more trees <http://www.socialventurepartners.org/seattle/who-we-are/>
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#### Suggestions for Tree Protection and Stewardship (pg. 4)

- **Neighborhood involvement with tree monitoring for health, measuring, tending (ivy removal or other maintenance) and mapping trees in neighborhood** to raise awareness, bird counts— can engage interest in stewardship through block parties. Ranking neighborhoods for most tall trees, best bird habitat, best bee and butterfly, best native plants, Frog habitat, owl/raptor/hawk habitat, best “green” houses, best vegetable gardens and rooftop/container gardens.
- **Encourage neighbors to notify other neighbors out of courtesy when applying for tree removal or large specie tree planting**, and help city monitor tree cutting with a hotline or website with approved tree cutting address lists that people can look up. Even with trees in one’s yard, these trees provide shade, windbreak, soil and groundwater stability and cool the neighborhoods in heat. Tree planting also can affect shading/obstruction for other neighbors. Trees can affect neighbors as much as home development and fence-building.
- **School programs: adopt a tree in your neighborhood for the year**, study about this type of tree and compare with others, change through season, which birds live there, etc. - can pair up with neighbors or non-profit education groups for interest in our local trees and habitat.
- **University programs:** more emphasis on research with urban forestry with effects of health and livability, community building, combat global warming, business attraction, tourism, habitat. Tracking tree loss and replacement. Tracking positive gains in areas of more tree density.
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- **Awards for Businesses to implement tree preservation, home design and community building for innovative designs** to reduce footprint/home size/reduce building material use and design with consideration of habitat and environmental impact, community enhancement, tree-planting, local food production and rooftop gardens. Possibly work with Social Venture Partners – Seattle (SVP) to come up with incentives to encourage businesses to develop more innovation around supporting tree habitats, protecting existing trees and planting more trees <http://www.socialventurepartners.org/seattle/who-we-are/>
- **Utility cost analysis of large homes** without trees vs. small/modest homes for cost for heating, cooling, watering using resources. **Incentives to reduce energy and resource consumption by increasing cost of utilities for gas, water, electricity after these large homes exceed a base rate of sustainable use comparable a modest home.**
- **County offer a rebate on the "drainage fee" portion of our taxes for each large tree that is an incentive to care and maintain trees**, rather than charging for permits to remove trees. Reward those who have the trees, while they are providing the benefits.

from Urban Forestry Meeting 6/5/19 - (updated 6/10/19)



**Washington Native Plant Society**

*Appreciate, Conserve, and Study Our Native Flora*

6310 NE 74<sup>th</sup> St., Ste 215E, Seattle, Washington 98115  
(206) 527-3210

July 25, 2019

Subject: City of Seattle Tree Ordinance

Mayor Durkan [jenny.durkan@seattle.gov](mailto:jenny.durkan@seattle.gov)  
Bruce Harrell [bruce.harrell@seattle.gov](mailto:bruce.harrell@seattle.gov)  
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Kshama Sawant [Kshama.Sawant@seattle.gov](mailto:Kshama.Sawant@seattle.gov)

Dear Mayor Durkan and Seattle City Councilmembers,

The Washington Native Plant Society commends you for your interest in Seattle's trees and urges you to work with the Urban Forestry Commission to update Seattle's tree protection ordinance this year. Our members and leaders have tracked Seattle's progress toward effective tree protection as the urban tree canopy has continued to disappear. Further delays of an effective tree protection ordinance increase the detrimental impacts of tree loss on our state's largest city, a city many of us call home and that Washingtonians treasure. Losing our urban forest means losing the native plants that define the city.

Native trees and shrubs within Seattle's urban forest create a strong, positive sense of place reflective of the Puget Sound region's natural richness. These green oases also contribute to a healthy environment for people; they provide restorative, educational, and recreational opportunities for residents and visitors. Our hemlocks, firs, and cedars provide habitat for birds and other wildlife that are disappearing in alarming numbers. Exceptional and Heritage Trees, grouped and individual, are the irreplaceable foundation of the urban forest. These established trees add economic value to urban neighborhoods. These trees ensure that neighborhoods are livable.

Trees are a frontline defense against and mitigation for climate change. Over the next 50 years, even with aggressive emissions reductions, temperatures will more than double Seattle's days of extreme heat<sup>1</sup>. The presence of trees reduces local temperatures. Trees are a cost-effective

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<sup>1</sup> Marcia Brown. Personal communication. Anthropogenic Warming and Public Health Consequences in Seattle and Spokane. University of Washington. 6/24/2019.

way of cleaning smoke from the air<sup>2</sup>. With increased smoke from wildfires, it is imperative to preserve and protect mature trees within our state's cities. Trees also help control the stormwater resulting from the heavier rainfalls. We need to increase the urban canopy, not stand by while it dwindles to nothing.

Protecting trees within urban areas contributes to environmental justice within the city as well as to regional ecologic health. Mature trees benefit the most vulnerable – residents without access to shelter and air-conditioning, children walking to school, and elders out exercising. Protecting trees does not preclude dense development. Vancouver, to the north, has both significantly more trees and higher population density<sup>3</sup>. It would be a shame for Seattle, the Emerald City, to lose its trees. We must protect the trees that we have now, as well as planting saplings that will shade future generations.

Among Seattle residents there is strong support for a robust urban forest, and for government that protects the city's exceptional and heritage trees. Washington Native Plant Society members, many of whom volunteer in city parks and green spaces, understand that the tree canopy contributes to the public good and can't be quickly replaced. As our member Michael Marsh so aptly put it, "An exact parallel to removing a 70-year old tree and replacing it with two saplings would be replacing an experienced City Council Member with two 3-year olds." We trust that you understand. The current rate of loss is unacceptable and fails to take into account the many benefits of trees.

The Washington Native Plant Society and our Central Puget Sound chapter urge you to slow and reverse Seattle's tree loss by updating the tree protection ordinance this year.

Respectfully,



Janka Hobbs  
Central Puget Sound Chapter Chair  
Washington Native Plant Society



Van Bobbitt, President  
Washington Native Plant Society



Becky Chaney, Conservation Chair,  
Washington Native Plant Society

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<sup>2</sup> McDonald, Rob, Tim Kroeger et al. Planting Healthy Air A global analysis of the role of urban trees in addressing particulate matter pollution and extreme heat. The Nature Conservancy. 2016.

<sup>3</sup> Treepedia. World Economic Forum. <http://senseable.mit.edu/treepedia/cities/seattle> accessed 7/12/2019

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**From:** Woody Wheeler <woody.wheeler@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Sunday, July 07, 2019 9:35 PM  
**To:** Pinto de Bader, Sandra <Sandra.Pinto\_de\_Bader@Seattle.gov>  
**Subject:** Comments on Draft Outline to Tree Regulations Ch. 25.11

CAUTION: External Email

Greetings,

I attended the Saturday meeting of the Urban Forestry briefing and received a copy there of the Draft Outline and Key Changes by Seattle Urban Forestry Commission Revision to Tree Regulations Chapter 25.11.

Here are my three comments on this document:

1. Overall I support the UFC modifications
2. I have concerns about item e: Will this criteria become standard in other cities? It seems like Seattle needs to be in synch with other cities on this so we can have a basis for comparison, i.e. apples to apples, tree canopy to tree canopy.
3. Under Hazard Tree Risk Assessment and Significant Tree Removal and Replacement, I would like to see encouragement and incentives for landowners to leave wildlife trees aka snags that have been modified for safety purposes (top removed, side branches limbed off, etc). Doing so would provide ecological and habitat values that would otherwise be lost by tree removal. Doing this should still trigger a replacement living tree.

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Woody Wheeler  
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**From:** heidi calyxsite.com <heidi@calyxsite.com>  
**Sent:** Thursday, July 11, 2019 8:05 AM

**To:** Pinto de Bader, Sandra <Sandra.Pinto\_de\_Bader@Seattle.gov>

**Subject:** My formal comments on the proposed tree regulations offered by UFC

**CAUTION: External Email**

Dear Mayor, City Council and Other Professional City Colleagues:

I am writing to urge you to support the current version of the Tree Protection Ordinance under consideration and to **make additional changes** in the near term. As you know, up to 80% of all mature trees in the City of Seattle are located on PRIVATE and not public land such as rights of way and parks. In addition to adopting the current version of the tree ordinance, you should consider the following:

Immediately remove tree policy and regulations from SDCI and place in the Office of Sustainability and Environment or Seattle Public Utilities.

1. Enact a tree cutting moratorium on private property until an analysis can be done which inventories all trees in the city. Vancouver, BC and Cambridge, MA. may be consulted for guidance.
2. Conduct a retrospective analysis of per SMC 25.11 which has never been enforced. Where violation of this section has been established, seek full recovery of mature tree value and put into a bonded tree fund.
3. Align all city policies to support an overarching tree retention policy.
4. Revise the City's Climate Action Plan so it has more of an emphasis on tree retention and green infrastructure.
5. Integrate Tree Retention as a part of the city's Public Health Infrastructure and seek ways to bond trees (new GASB 62 interpretation which permit capital booking of distributed green infrastructure) so there can be a mechanism to reimburse land developers for working to retain trees during development.
6. Under contract, review the activities of all tree companies doing business in Seattle given the evidence of rampant abuse of prevailing laws. Require tree companies to have certified arborists.
7. Re-evaluate the many dubious exceptions to our Critical Area Ordinance law which permits building on steep slopes, even where numerous mature trees are being cut down.
8. Review the guidelines for Hearing Examiners to establish whether there has ever been a case where a Petitioner was ruled in favor of. If you establish a pattern of adverse rulings consistently against Petitioners, conduct a regulatory review of the standards for Hearing Examiners.
9. Require Hearing Examiners ruling on complex environmental issues, to have proper credentials and training in science.
10. Review SEPA DNS rulings since many of them fail under the weight of evidence.
11. Review permit violations- neighbors alone are finding an alarming number of exceptional and mature trees being cut without a permit.
12. Hire 20 enforcement agents and provide an 800 number until 10pm, not reverting to calling the policy which is SDCI's current policy after 4:30pm.
13. Listen to Seattle Audubon per below:



Over half of all bird species in Seattle rely on trees. This includes migratory species like Western Tanagers and residents like Pileated Woodpeckers. **One of the most important things we can do for these tree-reliant species is to protect the urban forest.** That isn't happening. Instead, developers are clearing the urban forest at a rate of 120 acres of canopy cover per year.

In the ten years since the last update to the tree code, Seattle has lost approximately 1,200 acres of canopy cover. That's an area of canopy twice the size of Discovery Park taken from our neighborhoods.

You have a very short window to address climate change. Given the last four years of wildfire smoke, it is nearly criminal that we would allow mature trees to be cut down because we cannot figure out how to design our communities properly. Thank you for taking positive action so we can secure a decent future for future generations.

Sincerely,

Heidi Siegelbaum  
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<http://www.linkedin.com/in/heidisiegelbaum>

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----- Forwarded message -----

From: **ReVisioning Northgate** <[aldnorthgate@gmail.com](mailto:aldnorthgate@gmail.com)>

Date: Wed, Jul 17, 2019 at 10:04 AM

Subject: Tree Code legislation

To: <[jenny.durkan@seattle.gov](mailto:jenny.durkan@seattle.gov)>, <[sally.bagshaw@seattle.gov](mailto:sally.bagshaw@seattle.gov)>

Cc: Juarez, Debora <[debora.juarez@seattle.gov](mailto:debora.juarez@seattle.gov)>, [bruce.harrell@seattle.gov](mailto:bruce.harrell@seattle.gov) <[bruce.harrell@seattle.gov](mailto:bruce.harrell@seattle.gov)>, [kshama.sawant@seattle.gov](mailto:kshama.sawant@seattle.gov) <[kshama.sawant@seattle.gov](mailto:kshama.sawant@seattle.gov)>, [abel.pacheco@seattle.gov](mailto:abel.pacheco@seattle.gov) <[abel.pacheco@seattle.gov](mailto:abel.pacheco@seattle.gov)>, [lisa.herbold@seattle.gov](mailto:lisa.herbold@seattle.gov) <[lisa.herbold@seattle.gov](mailto:lisa.herbold@seattle.gov)>, <[lorena.gonzalez@seattle.gov](mailto:lorena.gonzalez@seattle.gov)>, <[mikeobrien@seattle.gov](mailto:mikeobrien@seattle.gov)>, Susan Ward <[aldnorthgate@gmail.com](mailto:aldnorthgate@gmail.com)>

Dear Mayor Durkan and Council Member Bagshaw,

ReVisioning Northgate wants to thank you for moving forward legislation to update the Tree Code, SMC 25.11.

As the City takes giant strides to allow more housing, it is critical that we simultaneously provide protections for our tree canopy, particularly in rapidly densifying neighborhoods. Much of that canopy is on private property. These trees provide for all residents, current and future, substantial benefits to health, to clean air, to mental well-being, to now-critical cooling, and to the beauty of all Seattle neighborhoods. As we dramatically increase in density, we must protect trees better than we do now.

We urge you to continue to support the revised draft of legislation proposed by the Urban Forestry Commission. In particular, we support extended protections and new standards for exceptional and significant trees, newly required permitting, new standards on public notice of trees to be removed, and more strenuous replacement criteria, with replacement discouraged in favor of retaining mature trees. The benefits provided by these trees to all will not be replicated for decades, and multiple replacements must be required in order to ensure viability.

Additionally, we urge funding more staff to enforce the Tree Code, as without stronger enforcement, even our existing protections are not always enforced.

And we urge expeditious passing of the new Tree Code, as each month marks losses in our invaluable canopy.

Yours truly,

Susan Ward  
Chair, ReVisioning Northgate

ReVisioning Northgate: a coalition of residents and business owners in the greater Northgate neighborhood.