



# Memo

**Date:** July 14, 2021  
**To:** Councilmember Dan Strauss, Chair, Land Use and Neighborhoods Committee  
**From:** Nathan Torgelson, SDCI Director; and Michelle Caulfield, OSE Acting Director  
**Subject:** Tree Protections Update – 2Q 2021 Report

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The City Council adopted [Resolution 31902](#) on September 16, 2019, directing SDCI and OSE staff to explore strategies to protect existing trees, increase Seattle’s tree canopy cover, and balance City goals to support future growth and density as provided in the City’s Comprehensive Plan. The resolution also directs SDCI and OSE to provide quarterly reports to the Chair of the Land Use and Neighborhoods (LUN) Committee on progress made. In 2020, SDCI and OSE delivered reports on February 12, July 22, and November 25 to share progress made, next steps, and actions accomplished to date, including the status of the 2020 Urban Forestry Management Plan Update. This year staff delivered the 1Q 2021 report on March 23 which summarized all the work accomplished over the past few months, including work underway and anticipated next steps. This is the 2Q report for 2021.

## **Progress Made on the Urban Forest Management Plan update (UFMP)**

When we last updated you in March, the Urban Forestry Core Team had produced recommendations to incorporate public comment into the Plan; SDCI had issued and published a SEPA Determination of Non-significance, which was not appealed. The Plan is currently completing internal review in hopes of publishing a final version in the next few weeks.

Next steps for the UFMP:

1. Once the Plan is finalized, the team will offer to brief Council. We are anticipating this happening before the end of the summer.
2. The UFMP will be a web-based document. The Executive Summary will be translated and printed in Amharic, Cantonese, Khmer, Korean, Mandarin, Oromo, Spanish, Somali, Tigrinya, and Vietnamese.
3. The team will be working with our community partners to distribute hard copies of the Executive Summary.

## **Progress Made and Work Underway on Tree Protection Updates**

SDCI, OSE, and its partners continue to work to improve tree protections, including work underway to conduct public outreach on potential tree legislation and continued progress made to track tree actions on private property:

### Public Outreach – Two Approaches

SDCI and OSE have developed a community engagement plan to inform tree protection legislation that uses two different methodologies running concurrently to reach all stakeholder groups identified in the Resolution, with a targeted focus on BIPOC communities.

- The first approach is to center and prioritize the voices of BIPOC residents by prioritizing culturally and linguistically appropriate engagement with residents of low-income and low-canopy neighborhoods. We are partnering with the Department of Neighborhood’s Community Liaison Program to reach historically underserved communities, including communities of color, immigrant and refugee populations, and underrepresented interest groups in the City to provide culturally

appropriate outreach and engagement services in multiple languages. Our target audience for this outreach effort are BIPOC communities and underrepresented groups engaged as part of the recent Urban Forest Management Plan Update: African American, Chinese (Cantonese and/or Mandarin), Disabled, Ethiopian (Amharic and Oromo), Somali, Filipinx, LatinX, Native American, seniors, Southeast CHAM refugees, unhoused populations, and renters city-wide.

- Our second approach is to facilitate public input through a series of listening sessions conducted to reach other key stakeholders. This will include, but is not limited to, business owners, homeowners, renters, builders, neighborhood groups, environmental organizations, and climate and environmental justice organizations.

For both outreach approaches, the urban forestry team is seeking to engage stakeholders to gather input about the tree protections update and to identify potential impacts and mitigation strategies. Outreach and engagement will begin on July 14 and is planned to run through August/September. SDCI, DON, and OSE will document community input, which will be considered as part of the tree protections update. Throughout this process, City staff will seek to better understand stakeholders' perspectives and keep them engaged in the process based on their interest level. In line with the outreach work completed to update the Urban Forest Management Plan, the outreach materials will be posted on SDCI's project website.

#### Council Requested - Tracking Tree Removal and Replacement

SDCI hired and trained three additional GIS analysts in Q2 to expedite the data entry work and condense the amount of time required to capture tree-related information from permits dating back to July 2019. Originally the work was anticipated to take at least two or three years due to the volume of applications as well as the time it takes to discern relevant tree protection information from site plans. However, with new additional staff hired, we are now forecasting that this work could be completed by end of Q4. This data set will help SDCI and OSE report on a multitude of trends beginning with trees preserved, replaced, and replanted at part of mitigation with the ability to focus on detailed data about each individual tree (i.e., tree species, tree type whether it is exceptional, nonexceptional, part of a tree grove). All new data obtained through this effort will support city staff to monitor canopy coverage over time and will inform upcoming policy and code development.

#### **Future Work**

SDCI and OSE are continuing to evaluate the strategies identified in the Resolution through a racial equity lens. We anticipate that we will complete public outreach in August/September, with the goal to make a draft proposal available for environmental (SEPA) review by the end of Q4 2021.

Copy: Aly Pennucci and Yolanda Ho, City Council Central Staff