

Tree Protections Update

Photo by John Skelton



Seattle Department of
Construction & Inspections



Seattle
Office of Sustainability
& Environment

Land Use and Neighborhoods Committee

December 8, 2021

TODAY'S PRESENTATION

- Citywide Urban Forestry Strategy
- Resolution 31902
- Outreach Feedback Highlights
- Five Strategies Being Explored
- Next Steps

REMINDER:

CITY'S URBAN FORESTRY STRATEGY

Partners/entities

- Public/Community
- Urban Forestry Commission (UFC)
- City
 - ✓ Departments – integrated UF functions, Trees for Seattle charter/structure
 - ✓ Mayor
 - ✓ City Council

Guiding documents/plans/policies

- Urban Forestry Management Plan (UFMP) – 2007, 2013, 2020
- Seattle 2035: Comprehensive Plan
- Resolution 31902

Urban Forestry work

- Tree protection – ordinance and department policies
- Tree maintenance/establishment
- Community engagement/education

REMINDER:

RESOLUTION 31902

Council requested SDCI and OSE to explore the following strategies:

Strategies

Expand exceptional tree definition and retain protections

Create significant tree removal permit

Require replacement for significant tree removal

Simplify tree planting/replacement requirements

Maintain tree removal limits in single-family zones

Explore in-lieu fee option for tree replacement

Track tree removal and replacement

Provide adequate funding to administer/enforce



WORK TOOK PLACE BETWEEN JULY AND OCTOBER 2021

OUTREACH FEEDBACK HIGHLIGHTS

KEY TOPIC	COMMUNITY LIAISONS BIPOC SUPPORTED Y/N/-	LISTENING SESSIONS FOCUS GROUPS SUPPORTED Y/N/-	COMMENTS
Protect exceptional trees	↑	↑	Caution “one-size fits all approach”
Create significant tree definition	↔	↔	Split support
Create a simple permit	↓	↓	Majority unsupported
Create a payment in-lieu option for replacement	↑	↑	Wide support
Require tree service provider registration, qualifications	↑	↑	Wide support
Update enforcement	↑	↑	Strong support

RESOLUTION 31902

Five Strategies Being Explored:

- 1. TREE SERVICE PROVIDER REGISTRATION AND SERVICE PROVIDER AND HOMEOWNER SELF-REPORTING**
- 2. EXPAND DEFINITION OF AN EXCEPTIONAL TREE**
- 3. DEFINE “SIGNIFICANT TREE”**
- 4. ALLOW FOR A PAYMENT IN-LIEU OPTION**
- 5. SIMPLIFY PROCESSES AND UPDATE ENFORCEMENT**

1 of 5 Strategies Being Explored

TREE SERVICE PROVIDER REGISTRATION AND ENHANCED TRACKING FOR TREES REMOVED OUTSIDE DEVELOPMENT

- **Tree service provider registration could include:**
 - ✓ Certified arborists, TRAQ qualified
 - ✓ Acknowledgement Affidavit
 - ✓ Posting/Reporting
- **Enhanced tracking:**
 - ✓ Could be online entry site plan submittal with SDCI-provided GIS tool into Tree Tracking System



2 of 5 Strategies Being Explored

EXPAND DEFINITION OF AN EXCEPTIONAL TREE BY LOWERING THRESHOLD FROM 30" TO 24" DSH, ADD TREES GROVES, HERITAGE TREES

- Goal to regulate more large, mature trees,
- Remove invasive species from City's list
- Strengthening tree grove protections and including heritage trees



3 of 5 Strategies Being Explored

DEFINE “SIGNIFICANT TREE” AS ANY TREE THAT HAS A DSH OF SIX INCHES OR GREATER AND IS NOT DEFINED AS AN EXCEPTIONAL TREE

- Currently no definition, some protections from removal, and no replacement requirements
- Exploring adding replacement requirements
- Exploring regulating at 6 inches or greater (either with or without development)
- Adding new criteria to prioritize trees with greatest ecological functions



4 of 5 Strategies Being Explored

ALLOW FOR PAYMENT IN-LIEU WHEN TREE REPLACEMENT IS REQUIRED

- Could allow flexibility when there is not enough space on site to plant trees, even in adjacent planting strip (ROW)
- Payment amounts could be based on national standard tree functional replacement manual
- Would support other City programs to plant trees
- Could focus replanting in areas with existing low canopy cover



5 of 5 Strategies Being Explored

SIMPLIFY PROCESSES AND UPDATE ENFORCEMENT PROVISIONS FOR TREE REGULATIONS

- Improve customer service
- Stronger tree regulations and enforcement will increase canopy over time
- Further increase penalties for illegal tree removals and retain criminal charges
- Improve/increase data collected
 - ✓ Tree service provider registration
 - ✓ Hazard tree documentation before removal
 - ✓ More trees protected, tracked
 - ✓ Allows staff to monitor canopy coverage and supports data-driven decisions



NEXT STEPS –

December

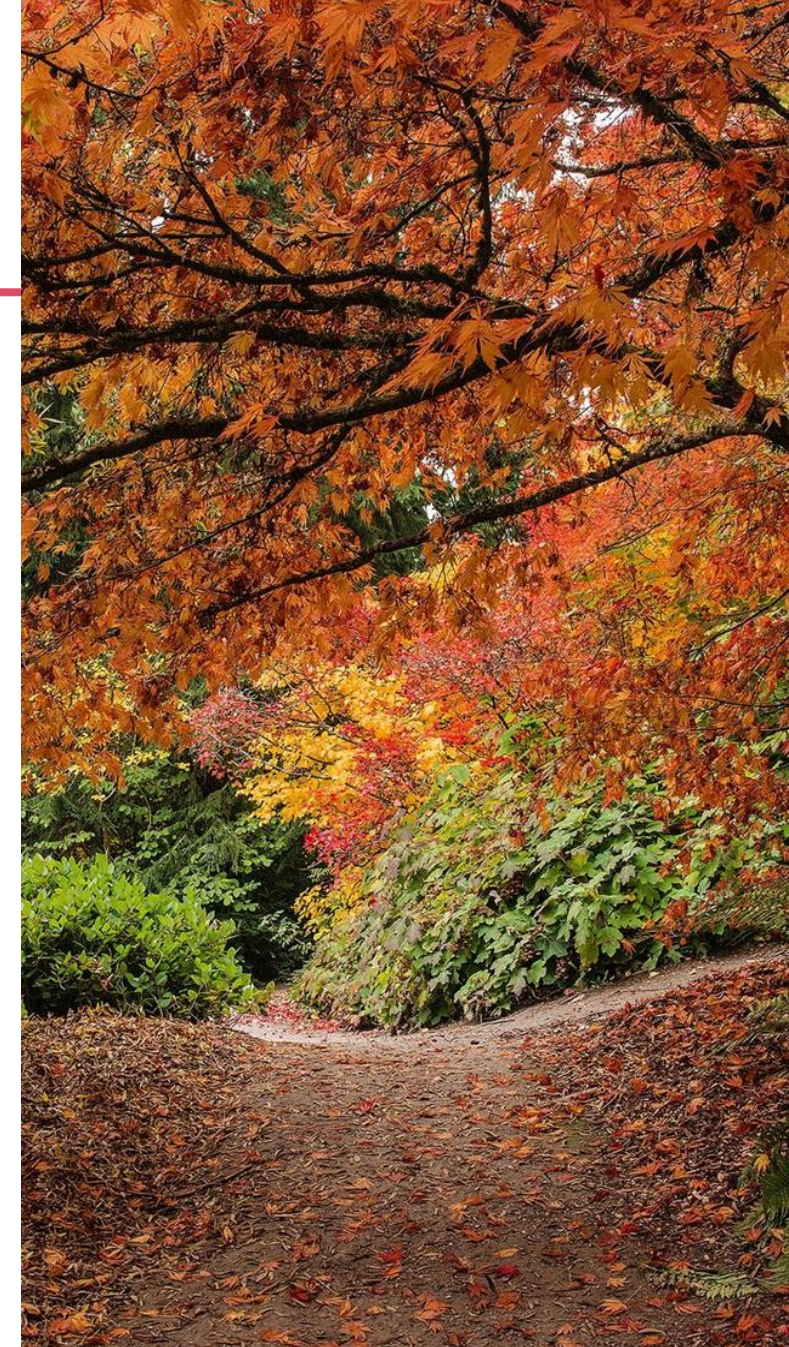
- Developing draft recommendations for environmental (SEPA) review for public comment

Q1 2022

- Work with stakeholders, including UFC, on any potential updates to the proposal
- Develop final recommendations for legislation

Ongoing

- Identify potential implementation and enforcement needs



Thank you!

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www.seattle.gov/sdci

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