



**Date:** November 25, 2020  
**To:** Councilmember Dan Strauss, Chair, Land Use and Neighborhoods Committee  
**From:** Nathan Torgelson, SDCI Director; and Jessica Finn Coven, OSE Director  
**Subject:** Tree Protections Update – 3Q 2020 Report

---

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. SDCI and OSE delivered the 1Q report to the LUN Committee on February 12, 2020 to share the project scope. The 2Q report was delivered remotely on July 22, 2020 to share progress made and next steps. This is the third report of 2020 which summarizes the actions accomplished to date including the status of the 2020 Urban Forestry Management Plan (UFMP) Update and the proposed draft Director’s Rule 13-2020.

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

The UFMP sets the goals and framework to guide Seattle’s urban forestry policies and programs. The City’s urban forestry team moved the draft 2020 Urban Forest Management Plan (UFMP) to the public comment period, which will be open through November 30. Staff kicked off this phase with a briefing to the Urban Forestry Commission on October 14.

The team shared the [draft plan](#), [executive summary](#), a webinar-style [presentation](#), and an online [comment form](#) with the public. The team reached back out to community members engaged during the Phase 1 (inclusive engagement) effort; key stakeholders that participated in listening sessions; and broadly shared the information through the Urban Forestry Commission bulletin, the Trees for Seattle Newsletter, and OSE’s newsletter.

Once the team receives public comment, it will incorporate it into the plan in December and will produce a revised plan for Mayoral approval. SDCI will then conduct a SEPA review and will issue a Determination. The team expects to share the plan with Council in the Spring 2021.

### **Progress Made on Tree Protection Updates in 3Q 2020**

SDCI, OSE, and partners continue to work to improve tree protections, including on specific strategies as outlined in [Resolution 31902](#). Highlights are outlined below.

#### Updates to Director’s Rule for Exceptional Trees

The proposed draft [Director’s Rule 13-2020](#) was published this summer and went through an extended public comment period. At that time, SDCI received over 800 public comment emails and letters with the vast majority in support of increased tree protections and many were requesting SDCI to go further with code changes. SDCI is in the process of reviewing and responding to stakeholder comments on the proposed DR 13-2020.

#### Fully Funded Lidar Project

SDCI and IT worked to bring together multiple departments to contribute a total of \$72,000 to fund the 2021 lidar acquisition project which is a 3D aerial scan of the earth’s surface that has many applications including measurement of tree canopy. With the City’s commitment to this project, we anticipate that

Department of Natural Resources will be successful in the next step to win the federal grant that will allow this project to move forward next year.

#### Greater Permit Review Coordination

This work has benefitted from having two additional SDCI arborists available to assist in the review of permit applications involving tree protection or removal and advise on enforcement cases. Recently, one of SDCI's arborists retired and we were able to maintain that key position through the hire of another experienced and certified arborist.

#### Updated Education and Information

Staff is preparing to issue a letter about tree regulations to tree service providers. The letter will provide updated information about the current regulations and best practices to help inform how to do tree work in Seattle.

#### Tracking Tree Removal and Replacement

SDCI GIS analysts are working to capture tree-related information from approved permit applications starting from July 2019. Staff have updated the SDCI Tree Tracker Worksheet to continue to expediate this process through the end of 2020.

#### Racial Equity Analysis

SDCI and OSE are evaluating the outstanding strategies identified in [Resolution 31902](#) through a racial equity lens. Staff is considering whether any additional or alternative strategies may be better suited to address environmental disparities in BIPOC neighborhoods. SDCI hired a temporary staff to apply the City's Racial Equity Toolkit to this work.

#### Seattle Home Fair Presentation on Tree Regulations

SDCI staff, including inspectors and arborists, will provide a presentation on tree regulations for the virtual Seattle Home Fair on January 30<sup>th</sup>. The purpose of the presentation will be to assist property owners in learning more about the tree codes such as what they need to know about exceptional trees, tree removal limits and how to protect trees when planning for remodels and detached accessory dwelling units.

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