



Legislation Text

File #: Res 31902, Version: 2

CITY OF SEATTLE

RESOLUTION _____

A RESOLUTION declaring the City Council’s and the Mayor’s intent to consider strategies to protect trees and increase Seattle’s tree canopy cover.

WHEREAS, a healthy urban forest growing on public and private land promotes a clean, healthy, resilient, and safe environment in the places where people live, learn, work, and play, and reinforces Seattle’s identity and legacy as a forested, livable city; and

WHEREAS, The City of Seattle (“City”) values the important services the urban forest provides to all in Seattle, such as increasing resiliency to climate change, managing stormwater runoff and erosion, enhancing public health, by cleaning our air and water, cooling riparian corridors, mitigating the heat island effect, and improving our shoreline and other wildlife habitat; and

WHEREAS, the City’s 2007 Urban Forest Management Plan established a goal of increasing Seattle’s tree canopy to 30 percent canopy cover by 2037; and

WHEREAS, the Equity and Environment Initiative is a call to action for the City to develop more inclusive environmental programs, including place-based and culturally appropriate strategies, to not only increase tree canopy cover but also more equitably distribute the benefits trees bring; and

WHEREAS, the City seeks to balance its goals of protecting, maintaining, and enhancing the urban forest as stated in the 2013 Seattle Urban Forest Stewardship Plan while supporting future growth and density as provided in the City’s Comprehensive Plan; and

WHEREAS, the City Council adopted Ordinance 120410 in June 2001, establishing the City’s regulations pertaining trees on private property, and Ordinance 122919 in February 2009, which provided additional

interim protections for trees located on private property; and

WHEREAS, the 2016 Seattle Tree Canopy Assessment found Seattle to be at 28 percent tree canopy cover and that the single-family residential land use type contributes the most to Seattle’s canopy cover, accounting for 63 percent of the total; and

WHEREAS, in October 2017, the Mayor issued Executive Order 2017-11 “directing City departments to improve departmental coordination, strengthen enforcement, and adopt new rules and regulations to improve and expand protections for Seattle’s urban trees and canopy coverage;” and

WHEREAS, concurrent with Ordinance 125791, implementing Mandatory Housing Affordability citywide, the City Council adopted Resolution 31870 in March 2019, recognizing the benefits of Seattle’s urban forest and committing to work with community members and City departments to update the City’s tree regulations; and

WHEREAS, the City Council adopted Resolution 31895 in August 2019, establishing the goals of a Green New Deal for Seattle and identifying actions necessary to meet these goals, which include encouraging preservation and planting of trees citywide to increase the city’s tree canopy cover and prioritizing engagement with residents of low-income and low-canopy neighborhoods; NOW, THEREFORE,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF SEATTLE, THE MAYOR CONCURRING, THAT:

Section 1. The City Council is ready to consider strategies recommended by the Mayor that would: protect existing trees, particularly exceptional trees, and trees at least 2 feet in diameter at breast height; increase Seattle’s tree canopy; and balance City goals to support future growth and density as provided in the City’s Comprehensive Plan. These strategies should prioritize the needs of low-income and low-canopy neighborhoods and are expected to include exploring the feasibility of:

- A. Retaining protections for exceptional trees and expanding the definition of exceptional trees.
- B. Adopting a definition of significant trees as trees at least 6 inches in diameter, and creating a

permitting process for the removal of these trees.

- C. Adding replacement requirements for significant tree removal.
- D. Simplifying tree planting and replacement requirements, including consideration of mitigation strategies that allow for infill development while balancing tree planting and replacement goals.
- E. Reviewing and potentially modifying tree removal limits in single-family zones.
- F. Establishing an in-lieu fee option for tree planting.
- G. Tracking tree removal and replacement on both public and private land throughout Seattle.
- H. Providing adequate funding to administer and enforce tree regulations.
- I. Requiring all tree service providers operating in Seattle to meet minimum certification and training requirements and register with the City.

Section 2. The Mayor shall direct the Seattle Department of Construction and Inspections (SDCI) and the Office of Sustainability and Environment (OSE), in partnership with other City departments as appropriate, to pursue the following actions in 2020 that will result in recommendations to update City policies, practices, and regulations related to trees in Seattle:

- A. Develop a project scope and conduct technical analysis to identify key issues regarding current regulations governing the management of trees in Seattle.
- B. Analyze the Urban Forestry Commission recommendations previously shared with the Mayor and the Council to inform development of recommendations.
- C. Develop and execute a culturally and linguistically appropriate community engagement plan that prioritizes engagement with residents of low-income and low-canopy neighborhoods and includes, but is not limited to, homeowners, renters, developers, neighborhood groups, environmental organizations, and climate and environmental justice organizations.
- D. Summarize feedback received from the community engagement process and results of technical analyses and, based on this information, prepare recommendations for updates to regulations, policies, and

business practices.

E. Assess resource needs to administer and enforce proposed changes.

F. Conduct State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) analysis and issue a SEPA determination.

G. Report quarterly to the Chair of the Planning, Land Use and Zoning Committee (“Committee”), or its successor committee, on progress made on completing the actions described above, and the anticipated timeline to complete outstanding actions, with the first report due to the Committee on January 31, 2020. The first report should include a copy of and progress made to implement the project scope, schedule, and budget for this work.

H. Submit legislation in 2020 for consideration by the Council. If more time is necessary to develop and transmit legislation due to procedural limitations or if additional issues arise during the technical analysis and community engagement, SDCI and OSE shall report to the Committee, or its successor committee, on any delays.

Adopted by the City Council the _____ day of _____, 2019, and signed by me in open session in authentication of its adoption this _____ day of _____, 2019.

President _____ of the City Council

The Mayor concurred the _____ day of _____, 2019.

Jenny A. Durkan, Mayor

Filed by me this _____ day of _____, 2019.

Monica Martinez Simmons, City Clerk

(Seal)