

TO: Neighborhood Tree Team members and Portland tree advocates
FROM: Bruce Nelson, Cully Tree Team 7 March 2022
RE: Portland Urban Forestry Commission Meeting February 17, 2022:
Summary and Comments

NOTE: This document is not an official document of the Urban Forestry Commission. I am a private citizen who is a volunteer member of the Urban Forestry Commission. I write this document as a private citizen.

Conflict of Interest Policy –

“Members of City advisory bodies are public officials, based on State law ORS 244.020(15), and as such are required to disclose conflicts of interest. Under the Oregon Revised Statute 244.020(3), an appointee has a conflict of interest when participating in an official action which could or would result in a financial benefit or avoidance of detriment to the public official, a relative of the public official, or a business with which either is associated.”

These meetings usually occur on a monthly basis, on the third Thursday of the month. Official minutes of the meetings are available at the website for the Urban Forestry Commission (UFC), once they are approved by the Commissioners (usually 1-3 months after the meeting). You can see and listen to You-tube recordings of the meetings for 2021 and 2022. Go to the link at the UFC website <https://www.portland.gov/trees/ufc> or to the You Tube sit <https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL1ToXf0RSV44U3FpC0nwlUqtF0mFuIXMY>

The decisions made at these meetings may affect volunteer tree advocacy and may influence Urban Forestry division processes and actions. I am sending you timely commentary on these monthly meetings. If you do not wish to receive this, let me know.

Italicized text indicates my own point of view and/or items not necessarily expressed during the meeting. Red bold text is used for my required statement that this is not an official or adopted statement from the Urban Forestry Commission, as well as the Conflict of Interest policy for the City of Portland. Bold black text is used for subject headings, lead presenters for a specific agenda item and occasionally either to identify who is saying what or for emphasis.

The monthly Urban Forestry Commission (UFC) meeting was held Thursday, February 17, 2022, 9:30 am – 11:35 am. It was held as a Zoom meeting, due to COVID-19 demands.

UFC Commissioners Present - Vivek Shandas (chair), Anjeanette Brown, Gregg Everhart, Adrienne Feldstein, Barbara Hollenbeck, Bruce Nelson, Daniel Newberry, Leah Plack, Damon Schrosk, Megan Van de Mark

UFC Commissioners Absent - None

Urban Forestry (UF) Staff Present – Jenn Cairo (City Forester, Portland Parks and Recreation, Urban Forestry division) ; Brian Landoe (Analyst 1, Portland Parks and Recreation, Urban Forestry division); Rick Faber (Permitting and Regulation Coordinator, Portland Parks and Recreation, Urban Forestry division); Jeff Ramsey (Science and Policy Specialist, Portland Parks and Recreation, Urban Forestry division); Nik Desai (Botanic Specialist II, Portland Parks and Recreation, Urban Forestry division)

City Attorney's Office – No one present.

Minutes Review - None.

9:30 a.m. Public Testimony - Harriet Cooke, first time attendee to this meeting, a Friends of Trees volunteer, and part of the climate action group 350 PDX, expressed the importance of building tree canopy in east Portland. She had heard that Friends of Trees was no longer involved in street tree planting, due to the loss of the programmatic permit that had previously been issued to the Bureau of Environmental Services (BES) to allow it to contract out work for street tree planting. She said that at a time when we need more trees, it did not seem to be constructive to have bureau practices that are in the short term reducing tree planting in public spaces like the right-of-way.

Daniel Newberry, in response to Harriet's statement and concerns, said that UFC has neither heard from the BES Tree Planting program nor from Friends of Trees about their tree planting activities. He hoped that will change.

Gregg appreciated Harriet coming to the UFC meeting to express her interest and concerns regarding the fact that this year, for the first time in many years, there is no street tree planting done in Portland by Friends of Trees staff and volunteers.

Barbara thanked Harriet for her comments and for advocating for more trees for east Portland.

Jenn shared that UF oversaw an estimated 3,000 street trees planted in east Portland in targeted areas. She also explained the process currently being used by Urban Forestry to address street tree planting.

Megan stated that she has asked repeatedly to have both Friends of Trees and BES Tree Planting Program present reports on their tree planting programs to the Urban Forestry Commission. Agenda time has not been set aside to meet either of those requests.

Damon shared that he too has been asking for this for many years, with no success. He does feel it is important that new UFC members have a good understanding of the three most important tree planting organizations in Portland – UF, Friends of Trees, and BES Tree Planting Program.

Vivek stated that he is hearing loud and clear from the previous statements the request to have as an agenda item a report from Friends of Trees and also from the BES Tree Planting Program. The current procedure for establishing the agenda for Urban Forestry Commission meetings is:

- Vivek meets with Jenn Cairo (City Forester) and Brian Landoe (Budget Analyst II and primary staff liaison for the Urban Forestry Commission) about a week or two before the scheduled UFC meeting.
- Jenn and Brian develop a tentative agenda prior to the meeting with Vivek. This tentative agenda includes timely items from UF and other city bureaus.
- Vivek then reviews the agenda and may make suggestions before a final agenda is agreed upon by all three and sent out to UFC members by Brian.

9:45 a.m. City Forester’s Report Jenn Cairo (City Forester, Portland Parks and Recreation, Urban Forestry division)

1. Jenn shared that there are time-certain items that need to be addressed by the Urban Forestry Commission. Some of these are spelled out by Code provisions. *(11.20.020.E)* She and Brian work to make sure those items are dealt with in a timely manner.

2. Portland Parks and Recreation (PP&R) Sustainable Futures team is exploring an assumption of street tree maintenance, including planting, by Urban Forestry at some point in the future. This is being viewed as a long-term project, needing much work before being brought to the public.
3. The Streets 2035 inter-bureau group is expected to continue its meeting for some months. There will be a large group meeting in March 2022. One of the items this group will be addressing is the conflicting standards of Urban Forestry and the Portland Water Bureau concerning how close a tree can be to a 24" diameter water conveyance pipe. The Water Bureau standard says 10' and Urban Forestry says 3'. This item has been discussed numerous times, without resolution.
4. Urban Forestry continues to express its concerns and suggestions for the draft Pedestrian Design Guide.
5. PP&R/Urban Forestry and BES's Tree Planting Program continue to meet to establish alignment of tree planting. Currently BES is focusing its efforts on privately owned commercial, industrial, and multi-family property. They are working on:
 - a) improving planting outcomes;
 - b) coordinating tree planting efforts;
 - c) improving communication between the government entities as well as with the public;
 - d) addressing redundancies;
 - e) working with community groups, especially to increase partnerships with BIPOC community groups working in low-canopy, low-income neighborhoods;
 - f) seeking to speak with a unified voice.

A part of speaking with one voice is the recent City Tree Planting Report recently posted on the website below. The report looks at tree planting efforts of Portland city government entities. An agreed-upon commitment is to update information annually at this site. As more work is done on this, UFC will be informed.

<https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/50811a7012dc4c038ce977d88705e5e3>

The above link takes you to a report with a date of June 2021 and includes information from 2020. It lists separately the number of planted trees contracted out or directly planted by Urban Forestry or the BES Tree Planting program. It does not have any information on:

1. *the costs of any of these tree-planting programs,*

2. *the number of trees planted citywide on private property by property owners,*
3. *the number of tree removal requests that were permitted,*
4. *the percentage of permitted tree removal/tree replant instances that were verified to have occurred.*

I don't know if any of that information is currently tracked.

6. Portland's PP&R is making a request for funds to plant 6,000 trees as part of the federal American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) passed by the US Congress and signed into law on March 11, 2021. This planting would come from funding the city is hoping to get. *It was not stated if this is money coming from the state, county, or city allocation of ARPA funds or where exactly Urban Forestry would be planting these trees.*
7. This will be the last official meeting that Barbara Hollenbeck, Gregg Everhart, and Damon Schrosk attend as official members of the Urban Forestry Commission. Many thanks were extended for their work as commissioners and their dedication to Portland's urban forest. *That is over 20 years of UFC experience leaving!*
8. Adrienne Feldstein will be assuming the role of chair of the Appeals Board. Barbara is training Adrienne to take on this responsibility. Leah Plack will also be joining this board, replacing Damon Schrosk.
9. The Urban Forestry Commission and other entities have requested a public hearing on the draft Pedestrian Design Guide. This will be occurring in the future. *I have included below a communication from Michelle Marx, received after the UFC meeting. Public comment on the revised draft of the Pedestrian Design Guide should be sent no later than 5 pm Friday April 1st. There will be a public hearing on the revised Draft Pedestrian Design Guide on Monday April 4th, from 3:30 pm to 5 pm via Zoom*

From: Marx, Michelle <Michelle.Marx@portlandoregon.gov>
Sent: Thursday, March 3, 2022 2:31 PM
To: Marx, Michelle <Michelle.Marx@portlandoregon.gov>
Cc: Gastaldi, Gena <Gena.Gastaldi@portlandoregon.gov>
Subject: PBOT Administrative Rule Notification

Dear Pedestrian Design Guide stakeholders and interested parties -

The Portland Bureau of Transportation (PBOT) is pleased to post for public notice a package of three administrative rules, all intended to formally adopt the newly updated Portland Pedestrian Design Guide. The Guide is an update to the City's 1998 Pedestrian Design Guide and serves as

the City’s primary guidance on how sidewalks should be built throughout Portland to ensure they are context-appropriate and accessible to people of all ages and abilities. Every sidewalk project that is designed and built in Portland must conform to these requirements. While the material currently being adopted relates to sidewalk design and construction, future additional chapters of the Pedestrian Design Guide relating to the design of corners and crossings will be added to this document and adopted via future administrative rule upon completion.

The updated Pedestrian Design Guide is the culmination of over two years of coordination with a Technical Advisory Committee, Stakeholder Advisory Committee, City staff across multiple bureaus and departments, City Advisory Committees and Commissions, and Portland residents. The Guide underwent a robust 30-day public review period in Fall 2021 and was revised and updated in response to public comment. The Pedestrian Design Guide was developed in collaboration with City programs and agencies responsible for the form and function of the right-of-way, to address and understand the competing needs within the pedestrian realm and be realistic in how the space can be designed to address all its functions. The Portland Pedestrian Design Guide is a living document that will be revisited and updated over time, as needed, to keep standards current with best practices.

The three administrative rules included in this adoption package include:

- TRN-1.09.2 – Portland Pedestrian Design Guide: This new administrative rule formally adopts the “A. Introduction” and “B. Sidewalks and Walkways” sections of the updated Pedestrian Design Guide. Section “C. Corners and Crossings” will be added to the document and adopted separately upon completion.
- TRN-10.17 - Sidewalk and Driveway Permits (including Asphalt Approaches): This existing administrative rule is updated to reflect the content of the new Pedestrian Design Guide.
- TRN-1.09 - Design Standards for Public Streets: This existing administrative rule is updated to reflect the content of the new Pedestrian Design Guide. PBOT is publishing the proposed updates for 30 days and will be accepting public comment for this update until 5:00pm on Friday, April 1, 2022.

A virtual public hearing will be held on Monday, April 4, 2022, at 3:30-5:00 PM PST. Each person will have 5 minutes to provide testimony. Please sign up by sending your name and request to provide testimony to pbotpolicycomments@portlandoregon.gov<mailto:pbotpolicycomments@portlandoregon.gov>. Any written comments may also be submitted to pbotpolicycomments@portlandoregon.gov<mailto:pbotpolicycomments@portlandoregon.gov>. All comments received will be reviewed by PBOT staff. The virtual hearing will be held via Zoom

at this link:

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/83846821479?pwd=Q05NTFFJOGg3SnlNTXQxbExTSldRdz09>.

Information regarding the administrative rule updates and public hearing, as well as the full text of the updated Portland Pedestrian Design Guide, can be found on the project website<<https://www.portland.gov/transportation/planning/pedestrian-design-guide-update#toc-updated-pedestrian-design-guide-now-available>> as well as on this Portland.gov site: <https://www.portland.gov/transportation/permitting/updates-ped-design-guide-admin-rules>.

Best,

Michelle Marx
Pedestrian Coordinator
Policy, Planning, and Projects

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Following the City Forester's report Bruce and Barbara asked for clarification on when terms expire for Urban Forestry Commission members. There is potentially conflicting information in Title 11, in Bruce's opinion. Barbara stated that her term began in April and she wondered why her last month of service is in February. *Damon believes that he has only served for about 6 years, since he finished the term of a UFC member who left before completing a term. Gregg also stated, in separate communication, that she also completed the term of another UFC member.* As no representative from the City Attorney's Office was present at the meeting, Jenn and Brian agreed to follow up on this question with the City Attorney's Office. *This same statement was made at the previous UFC meeting but was not accomplished prior to the start of this February UFC meeting.*

10:05 a.m. Citywide Canopy Changes Jeff Ramsey (Science and Policy Specialist, PP&R, Urban Forestry division); Vivek Shandas (Portland State University Professor and lead for the PSU Sustaining Urban Places Research Lab); Jenn Cairo (City Forester, Portland Parks and Recreation, Urban Forestry division)

Jeff presented findings from “Tracking Portland’s Tree Canopy Cover,” which was just published online on February 16th. *See below for report.*

<https://www.portland.gov/sites/default/files/2022/tree-canopy-monitoring-2020.pdf>

Urban Forestry is using tools and a protocol developed by the US Forest Service (USFS) as part of its Urban Tree Canopy Assessment suite of tools. This set of tools is used in many cities in the country. See the link below for more information about this valuable resource.

<https://toolkit.climate.gov/tool/urban-tree-canopy-assessment>

The UF report looks at tree canopy changes in Portland from 2000 to 2020, at 5-year intervals, and this report primarily focuses on 2015-2020. The metrics used for this study are based on canopy comparisons for 4,000 points within Portland. The way the data is gathered does not give useful information for specific neighborhoods, but only for the city as a whole. The arbitrary goal of a desired 33.3% canopy cover was set in 2007 and is used for both the Portland Climate Action Plan and the Portland Comprehensive City Plan 2035.

Metro currently does LIDAR mapping of tree canopy locally. That was last done in 2014 but new mapping will occur soon.

Jeff reminded UFC members that from 1972-2015, information available to Urban Forestry indicated increases in tree canopy citywide but also widespread canopy gaps between different parts of the city. Data gained from 2015-2020 show the overall city canopy coverage decreased from 30.7% to 29.8%. This is not a statistically significant difference but it should be noted that the canopy figure is declining, not increasing, which is new. Jeff feels fairly confident that other sorts of canopy data support the idea that Portland is indeed experiencing a net loss of canopy.

It seems relevant to consider that between 2015 and 2020:

1. The data used for this report does not hone in on where canopy gains and losses are occurring. It only shows gain or loss by building zone, not neighborhood.
2. Title 11, implemented in 2015, greatly improved tree protection in Portland. It brought many additional trees into the city permitting arena.

3. Recently other cities throughout the country have reported canopy reductions, notably Washington D.C., Philadelphia, and Charlotte.
4. It appears that well-established trees seem to be more resilient and adding additional canopy benefits to our city. However, new plantings and relatively young trees struggle to establish and will not provide needed benefits for years to come.

As I think about what Jeff said, after scanning the report and considering other information, I'm left with an array of thoughts.

- a) Urban Forestry believes strongly that the adoption of Title 11 has greatly helped preserve more trees. A former Urban Forestry Commission member agreed with that perspective. My conclusion is that it is possible that without the adoption and implementation of Title 11, the canopy loss would have been much greater and likely statistically significant.*
- b) The new norm for cities growing in population and area is canopy loss. Until cities place real value on trees as critical infrastructure this situation is unlikely to change. Reversing this trend in Portland and elsewhere will take a huge effort involving all sectors of society.*
- c) I hope that UF can get more small-level detail from its use of the USFS Urban Tree Canopy Assessment suite of tools. Where is change occurring, why is it occurring, what can be done to improve the canopy?*

Vivek shared that his Sustaining Urban Places Research lab at PSU is using a different approach to gathering data on Portland's tree canopy. It is primarily using data gained from Google Earth images and then layering onto that additional information from neighborhoods. The most recent research from his group is in the peer-review stage so is not yet published. Preliminary conclusions appear to be:

1. Neighborhoods previously rich in canopy are seeing a growth in their canopy while those with low canopy are experiencing a net loss in canopy.
2. Neighborhoods experiencing the highest temperatures appear to be those neighborhoods with the lowest canopy.
3. Greatest loss of canopy in Portland appears to be in neighborhoods east of I-205 during 2014-2020;
4. The death toll map from the 2021 heat dome event shows a greater number of heat-related deaths in areas on the east side that have experienced canopy loss and also have low canopy levels.

Jenn shared that she feels fortunate to have researchers in Portland and elsewhere studying the urban forest. Portland has various groups measuring the tree canopy

including Urban Forestry using the US Forest Service Urban Tree Canopy Assessment tool, Metro using LIDAR data, and the PSU Sustaining Urban Places Research Lab using satellite imagery and other means. Urban Forestry has a number of programs that are helping Portland's urban forest. Recent amendments to Title 11 have provided expanded tree protection for trees 20" dbh and larger in selected situations. The UF-sponsored Yard-tree Giveaway and Opt-out Street Tree programs are being expanded and are getting trees planted. The Portland City Council has approved Urban Forestry's request to update Portland's Urban Forest Management Plan and fund a deeper look at more fundamental changes that may be needed in Title 11. Additionally, passage of the Parks levy has allowed for expanded Urban Forestry activities including implementation of a Parks tree maintenance program. The PP&R Sustainable Futures group is studying how street tree maintenance might be taken on by Urban Forestry. These are short-term and long-term steps to improve Portland's urban forest.

Urban Forestry will be reporting the preceding canopy information to City Council on 9 March (*date has since changed to Wednesday March 16th at 2 pm*). There will also be invited testimony.

UFC members commented on the information presented.

1. Daniel thinks this is important information to bring to City Council. He suspects the high pressure of development in east Portland is contributing to the canopy loss. He thinks the term "canopy retention" may be useful in describing policies and practices that help existing trees thrive.
2. Adrienne appreciates the information. She wondered if there is something UFC should do together, given this information.
3. Megan would like to have the information presented by Jeff and Vivek be available to others. Brian said he will post the information for UFC members to have. *I can't find any link to this currently.*
4. Damon worried that regulations with too little enforcement are contributing to this loss of canopy.
5. Barbara stressed the constant need to educate elected officials about the ramifications of the loss of canopy.
6. Gregg was surprised that the loss of canopy as measured by the US Forest Service was not statistically significant. She does feel that loss of trees at the local level is a key factor for energizing residents' concerns. It is becoming increasingly challenging to preserve space for trees.

It was agreed that the Policy Committee would write a letter to the City Council about these canopy findings and that a member of UFC would provide invited testimony.

11:10 a.m. Title 11 Technical/Minor Amendments Update Project - Brian Landoe (Analyst 1, Portland Parks and Recreation, Urban Forestry division); Nik Desai (Botanic Specialist II, Portland Parks and Recreation, Urban Forestry Division)

Nik and Brian reviewed 12-15 of the technical amendments to Title 11. The plan is to bring to City Council for review many technical and minor amendments in late spring or early summer (June 2022). At the March 17 UFC meeting, members will be asked for their suggestions on any changes to these draft amendments. Currently there are 36 amendments that may be brought to City Council. Specific code amendment language can be seen at the project website. Comments from the public on these amendments can also be made there:

<https://www.portland.gov/trees/title-11/about>

Daniel commented that it would be helpful to have the financial impacts of the proposed amendments. Vivek posed the theoretical question of how the amendments would hold up if there were an authoritarian City Forester. Jenn said that she and her staff look closely at amendments and the code to try to insure that the intent will be followed, regardless of the character of those administering the code.

Next Urban Forestry Commission Meeting: The next Urban Forestry Commission meeting will be 9:30 a.m. – 11:30 a.m., Thursday March 17, 2022, as a Zoom meeting. Check the link below prior to the meeting for the agenda, meeting materials, and how you can gain access to this Zoom meeting,

<https://www.portland.gov/trees/ufc/events/2021/6/17/urban-forestry-commission-meeting>