



## Land Use & Environment Committee

### Master Street Tree Plan Update

**Agenda Date:** 8/17/2017  
**Agenda Item Number:** 5.A  
**File Number:** 17-0839

---

**Type:** report **Version:** 1 **Status:** Filed

---

**Title**

Master Street Tree Plan Update

**Recommended Action**

**Committee Recommendation:**

Not referred to a committee.

**City Manager Recommendation:**

Receive the briefing; no action requested.

**Report**

**Issue:**

Whether to receive a briefing on the development of an update to the City's Master Street Tree Plan.

**Staff Contact:**

Shelly Bentley, Assistant Planner, Urban Forestry Program Manager, 360.753.8301

**Presenter(s):**

Shelly Bentley, Assistant Planner, Urban Forestry Program Manager  
Kevin McFarland, Consultant, Sound Urban Forestry

**Background and Analysis:**

*Urban Forest Strategic Plan*

In 2015, the City completed an Urban Forestry Strategic Plan (Strategic Plan). The purpose of the Strategic Plan was to evaluate the City's current urban forestry program (program), including current responsibilities, department resources, and organizational structure. The Strategic Plan also made recommendations for adapting the program to maximize its efficiency and effectiveness (See attachment) and achieve our community's vision for a healthy and diverse urban forest.

Since completion of the Strategic Plan, staff has moved forward with implementing several of the recommended actions, including forming interdepartmental urban forestry technical and policy teams and completing an inventory of street trees.

### *Street Tree Inventory*

The street tree inventory (inventory) includes all street trees for which the Parks, Arts, and Recreation Department has responsibility for managing—all major corridors and downtown (See attached Street Tree Map). This was the first inventory in 17 years, and was funded by a grant from the Washington State Department of Natural Resources Urban and Community Forestry Program. The data collected includes tree species, size, condition, and maintenance needs.

### *Master Street Tree Plan*

Collection and analysis of the data was vital to updating the City's Master Street Tree Plan (MSTP), which has not been updated since its adoption in 2002. New industry standards, emerging asset management technology, and changes in the street tree population make the existing plan out-of-date. A new MSTP is also needed to establish a consistent, efficient, and predictable approach to how the City manages street trees along major corridors and in downtown.

As primarily an internal document, the MSTP will guide City staff with consistent and predictable street tree management and maintenance objectives and priorities. The MSTP will outline urban forestry management practices that are:

- Financially sustainable,
- In keeping with current professional practices, and
- Protective of City and private infrastructure.

The Plan will also support staff's ability to communicate with, anticipate the needs of, and appropriately respond to business and property owners, and community members.

### *Master Street Tree Plan Scope*

The Master Street Tree Plan scope (See attachment) will include:

- Street tree management goals and priorities;
- Street tree inventory methodology and data;
- Street tree inventory analysis;
- Maintenance and budgeting recommendations; and
- Street tree management standards, policies, and protocols

The management goals and priorities in the MSTP are being developed with input from internal and external stakeholders. As included in the project's Outreach and Communication Strategy (See attachment) project staff are interviewing City staff to better understand existing conditions and challenges within departments.

### *Community Stakeholder Meeting*

Staff also convened a meeting of community stakeholders in June to learn about their values, priorities and concerns as they relate to street trees. Despite diverse perspectives, several overarching themes emerged from the group's discussions:

- The acknowledgement that trees contribute greatly to the streetscape;
- The importance of maintenance, and particularly protecting sidewalks; and

- Urban forest planning is but one element of urban design along a streetscape.

Participants also stressed that staff consider the capacity of the City to maintain the existing population prior to planting new trees. And that adequate planning for new trees, including possible alternate designs and standards, is preferable over continuing with the status quo. See the attachment for participating stakeholders and themes.

### *Current Project Status Briefing*

Staff will share, as part of the Land Use and Environment Committee (LUEC) briefing, an overview of current street tree conditions, initial findings from the inventory analysis, general insights from the plan development process to date, and key linkages to other major City plans and regulations. Staff will return to LUEC in October to seek input on a complete MSTP draft. See the attachment for a complete project schedule.

### *Next Steps after the Master Street Tree Plan*

This process to date, including conducting in-depth staff interviews, data analysis, and hearing from stakeholders, has revealed a need for urban forest management planning that falls outside the scope of a street tree plan. Just one example being how to address conflicts between street trees and sidewalks.

The Strategic Plan recommends that the City “develop and implement a comprehensive management plan” to determine the overall approach to growing and managing the entire urban canopy, including both public and private trees. It would also establish how the City will work to achieve specific Comprehensive Plan policies.

Developing a management plan would involve multiple departments and include extensive public engagement. It would be the first time since 1990 that the community was engaged a broader conversation on the urban forest, and would fulfill another Strategic Plan recommendation for involving citizens in resource management.

### **Neighborhood/Community Interests (if known):**

As demonstrated by the range of participants in the MSTP stakeholder meeting, there is a broad range of community interests in street tree management along the city’s major arterials and in downtown: residents, business owners, transit operators, etc.

### **Options:**

Not applicable; briefing only.

### **Financial Impact:**

The staff time and contract with Sound Urban Forestry has already been allocated to and budgeted for development of a Master Street Tree Plan in 2017. Development of an Urban Forest Management Plan does not currently have funding.

### **Attachments:**

Urban Forestry Strategic Plan

Street Tree Map (Major Corridors and Downtown)

Master Street Tree Plan Scope

Master Street Tree Plan Outreach and Communication Strategy

Stakeholder Meeting Participants & Themes

Master Street Tree Plan Project Schedule & Tasks