

Seattle Urban Forestry Commission

Peg Staeheli, Chair • Tom Early, Vice-Chair

Gordon Bradley • Leif Fixen • Donna Kostka • Joanna Nelson • Jeff Reibman • Erik Rundell • Steve Zemke

November 5, 2014.

Scott Kubly
Director, Seattle Department of Transportation
700 5th Avenue
Seattle, WA 98124

RE: Department of Transportation DR 3-2014 Street Tree Manual

Dear Scott,

The Urban Forestry Commission commends the Department of Transportation, specifically the Urban Forestry staff for developing an exceptional manual for the management of our street trees. This document provides comprehensive guidance for residents, developers, contractors and arborists.

The UFC have some comments and recommendations to clarify the guidance specifically

Pg 4 Purpose Intent and Scope:

Add: ...The proper care of existing trees supports citywide canopy goals, **improves habitat**, protects water quality

Revise: In addition, during construction and site development of **public right of way** that Low Impact Development Principles and *(it should be clear this manual is focused on right of way to avoid confusion with DPD)*

Add: This manual outlines....during **right of way** construction and **adjacent** site development...

Delete following: ... from impervious surfaces. ~~and reducing the need for additional impervious surfaces.~~

Pg 8 Prohibited Acts and Penalties:

Shift the list the list of acts to follow the second sentence.

Relocate the "Glossary of Terms" paragraph to pg 6.

Pg 10 Street Tree Permitting

Reorder for emphasis: Property owners are responsible for maintaining **any street trees adjacent to their property not identified as city maintained** and the trees on their own property which impact the public place.

Pg 12 Street Tree Planting

UFC requests more encouragement to plant medium to large trees by reordering this list and being clearer on the need to plant the largest tree that can be accommodated. Small and columnar trees should be planted only if the space is limited.

Pg 13 under Lateral Clearances

Clearance from lighting -Please discuss the impact in the right of way of the 20 feet in each direction (40 feet without trees) on an arterial and on residential streets.

Clearance from underground utilities- It appears that the word "Edge" should be added to address the various widths of pipes, encased conduits, vaults, meters etc. And/or should vaults and meters have 7.5 clearance from centerline to avoid uplifting?

Pg 14 Standard Plan 100a

We have concern that the 5 foot minimum tree pit is not being enforced and the text on pg 15 2nd paragraph "minimum 24 inches greater than rootball diameter conflicts with this paragraph.

Please clarify when you would not specify the root barrier along a curb.

Pg 15

See comment above.

4th paragraph- best practice removes all the twine, burlap, plastic and wire. Suggest clearer language.

Image is not relevant to the right of way (intent of this manual) and shows invasives.

Pg 20 Vegetation Management:

In addition to the vertical clearances on pg 13 we suggest addition of a paragraph on vegetation maintenance on pg 20. Residents and property owners are responsible for fall leaf pick up to maintain sidewalk clearance.

Tree Removal and Replacement

Pg 22- Please clarify the posting location and method. The image on pg 31 shows tape around a tree. Is this preferred? Should image be relocated? See also pg 27 Protect Tree Posting.

Pg 23-

Edit: When a street tree is to be replaced ~~on-site~~ the following standards apply:

Edit: Where planting space....on the original ~~site~~ **location**, alternative conditions....

Tree Protection Information for Other Contractors

General: Tree protection is an area of significant concern where clarity is required since this is an evolving practice of care among earthwork, utility, irrigation, and paving contractors. This is also an area where the UFC believes improvement is required between the oversight role of SDOT and DPD inspectors for frontage development. Strong protection of our existing trees sends the best message that Seattle is raising the bar for Urban Trees. (see page 72 of Trees and Development)

How will SDOT work to train DPD inspectors?

Pg 25 and 26 Critical Root Zone and Standard Plan 133

While the industry has not been definitive on the critical root zone, SDOT's definition using Zone A is a concern as it is less restrictive than most definitions. It is a concern since the sDOT definition may confuse site based protection using the term CRZ meaning a greater area of the root zone. We also see a conflict with the "50%" wording under Penalties for Injuring Trees on pg 29.

Pg 25 Zone A

Be clear this is SDOT's definition. Columnar trees – why lump columnar and small trees? There could be very large columnar trees that would have significantly more root zone than a small tree. (See Second Ave. north of Seneca for example)

Pg 27 Zone B

Concern that it appears that the focus on protection is Zone A and there is nothing to encourage removal of unnecessary pavement.

Heritage Tree Program

Pg 32 Add how to nominate a tree.

Clarify where a plaque would be placed.

Exceptional Trees are in a nebulous status under current DPD interpretation, not sure this wording has value.

Additional Resources

Add: Trees and Development: ISA by Nelda Matheny and Jim Clark

Permits:

If an owner has extensive frontage – multiple block faces such as UW, Seattle Schools, High Point OSA will there be a blanket permit for tree maintenance? Are there protocols required?

Sincerely,

Peg Staeheli, Chair
Seattle Urban Forestry Commission

cc: Mayor Ed Murray, Council President Burgess, Councilmember Bagshaw, Councilmember Clark, Councilmember Godden, Councilmember Harrell, Councilmember Licata, Councilmember Rasmussen, Councilmember O'Brien, Councilmember Sawant, Jill Simmons, Barbara Gray, Darren Morgan, Eric McConaghy.

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