



# Seattle Street Tree Ordinance *2013 Update Proposal*

SDOT Street Use & Urban Forestry Presentation  
City Council PLUS Committee, March 27, 2013

# Presentation Overview

- SDOT Street Use and Urban Forestry
- Current Ordinance Background
- Proposed Street Tree Ordinance
- Community Outreach
- Tools to Support the Proposed Ordinance

# Street Use & Urban Forestry Mission

The Street Use and Urban Forestry Division manages the City's rights-of-way, operating under the authority of Seattle Municipal Code, Title 15. This is done through the review, permit issuance, inspection and enforcement of non-traffic-related activities in the public right-of-way.





# *Seattle Tree Policy and Regulation Timeline*

- 1961: First street tree planted in support of 1961 Worlds Fair and Street Tree Ordinance initially adopted
- 2004: Comprehensive Plan established tree canopy goals
- 2006: Climate Action Now
- 2007: Urban Forestry Management Plan adopted
- 2011: SDOT Action Agenda support

# *2013 Street Tree Ordinance Proposal*

- Replaces the “current” 1961 Ordinance
- Supports the Pedestrian Master Plan and Bicycle Master Plan
- Clarifies and formalizes current procedures and policies for management of right-of-way trees
- Supports the Street Tree Manual Director’s Rule in support of small businesses and property owners who conduct tree-related work Seattle’s rights-of-way

# Street Tree at 4<sup>th</sup> and Blanchard--1962



# Street Tree at 4<sup>th</sup> and Blanchard--2012



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# *Community Outreach*

- **Direct mailing:** (2100 multi-language brochures) to tree services and landscape firms, property managers and real estate agents.
- **Media contacts and blogs:** over 50 mentions and 6 interviews
- **Community meetings:** 25 meetings across the city. Five specifically scheduled public information meetings. Twenty community councils and business groups
- Three meetings with **Urban Forest Commission**
- **Future support for certification** upon approval

# *Tree Protection*

**Existing Ordinance:** Street Use Ordinance calls only for preserving trees but provides no detail.

## **SDOT Proposal :**

- Make it illegal to damage or destroy a street tree
- Regulate attachment of seasonal lighting to trees
- Prohibit topping, spurring, attaching signs or objects
- Prohibit placement of construction debris adjacent to trees
- Regulate the storage of materials adjacent to right-of-way trees

# Tree Protection



# *Permitting*

**Existing Ordinance:** Require permits to plant, prune or remove a street tree. No requirement to replace a street tree.

## **SDOT Proposal :**

- Describe the process & procedures for applying for a permit
- Define criteria for granting planting, pruning or removal permits
- Require a replacement tree when a removal permit is granted
- Allow minor pruning of 2" inch diameter limbs or less without a permit

# *Tree Maintenance*

**Existing Ordinance:** Does not define responsibility for maintenance of right-of-way trees.

## **SDOT Proposal :**

- Clarify SDOT & property owner responsibilities for tree maintenance
- Give city authority to perform emergency work on privately owned ROW trees
- Establish criteria by which a tree can be deemed a public nuisance (i.e. Dutch Elm Disease)
- Retain SDOT's authority to order the maintenance of a right-of-way tree to ensure public safety



# *Arborist Certification / Qualifications*

**Existing Ordinance:** Does not require any specific qualifications for companies performing tree work or standards for work performed by them

## **SDOT Proposal :**

- Require *any* maintenance work on street trees to be performed or supervised by an ISA certified arborist
- Establish requirements for a business license and insurance for tree care firms (Street Tree Manual)
- Allow a property owner to perform minor pruning without a permit
- Require a permit for major pruning by property owner
- Require tree work to meet industry standards

# *Arborist Certification Requirements Support Citywide Canopy Health and Goals*

- Registered Tree Care Firms – business license, insurance, knowledge of City ordinances and safety requirements
- Certified Arborists – minimum qualification to assure quality of maintenance. Knowledge of tree health and disease intervention/prevention
- Well maintained trees are healthier, improve property values and provide a higher level of sociological and environmental benefits
- Well maintained trees improve public safety in and adjacent to the right-of-way

# *Penalties and Fines*

**Existing Ordinance:** Inadequate penalties for illegal tree work on privately maintained trees

## **SDOT Proposal :**

- Define illegal activities related to the treatment of trees
- Establish penalties for damaging or destroying trees

# *Tree Crew on the job*



# *Support Tools*

## Client Assistance Memos

- Tree Planting CAM-2300
- Seasonal Lighting – CAM-2301
- Tree Pruning / Removal CAM-2302
- Tree Posting Standards CAM-2307

## Online Street Tree Map

## Urban Forestry Management Plan

## Street Tree Manual

1 – Definitions; 2 – Protection of trees during Construction; 3 – Removal, Replacement and Planting of Trees; 4 – Evaluating Tree Risk Exposure; 5 – Tree Maintenance Guidelines; 6 – Tree Reports

# *Summary of Benefits of Proposed Ordinance*

- Tree Protection improved
- Permitting procedures are better described and geared towards national standards (ANSI-A300)
- Tree maintenance responsibilities are clarified and standards are established
- Arborist certification requirements improve quality of tree care in the right-of-way
- Penalties are established to promote tree preservation



- Thank You