

TO: Planning Commission
FROM: Brad Medrud, Planning Manager
DATE: January 24, 2023
SUBJECT: Street Tree Plan Update

1) Recommended Action:

Review the packet and be prepared for a discussion with City staff of the gap analysis and public engagement plan.

2) Background:

Trees are an essential part of the character of the City. As part of a healthy community and urban forest, they provide many environmental, economic, and community benefits. Trees and their associated vegetation work constantly to mitigate the negative effects of development, while protecting and enhancing lives within the community. In addition to environmental benefits such as improving and protecting water and air quality, directly and indirectly addressing the effects of climate change, and buffering urban noise, trees and their associated vegetation also have socioeconomic and aesthetic benefits, including promoting equity and environmental justice within the community by ensuring each neighborhood in the City receives community investment and support.

The Tumwater City Council made urban forestry one of four top priority actions for 2022-23. The City Council adopted the *Urban Forestry Management Plan* on March 2, 2021 after four years of entirely City-funded work by City staff, stakeholders, a consultant, the Tree Board, and the Planning Commission.

The City's urban forest consists of all trees and understory plants on public and private property in the City. It includes a diverse mix of vegetation that is managed by a broad group of individuals and groups that are located in a range of urban and natural settings including private properties, developed parks, rights-of-way, conservation areas, and other public lands.

The focus of the *Urban Forestry Management Plan* is the "The Right Tree in the Right Place." The *Urban Forestry Management Plan* guides the stewardship of the urban forest within the City through a series of implementation actions. The primary goals, objectives, and actions that address street trees include:

Goal 1. Restore and enhance the community and urban forest.

Objective 1.1. Increase canopy cover in the City to expand the community and urban forest.

Action C. Require appropriate tree planting in new development and redevelopment, by emphasizing proper planning for trees, correct planting techniques, and aftercare that supports the healthy establishment of newly planted trees.

Objective 1.2. Improve and maintain an optimal level of age distribution and species diversity of trees in the community and urban forest by increasing the use of desirable trees.

Action A. Designate tree species based upon specific purposes and site conditions for each project and maximize the benefits of trees while maintaining species diversity.

Goal 3. Manage City-owned community and urban forestry resources for maximum benefit.

Objective 3.3. Improve the health and care of City trees through good horticultural practices.

Action A. Develop the recommended City Street Tree and Landscaping Tree Lists based on local experience.

Action E. Consider the implications of having the City assume maintenance responsibilities for all street trees in City rights-of-way.

Objective 3.4. Establish or enhance the character of City streets using trees in City rights-of-way, where adequate rights-of-way exist.

Action A. Use the updated Comprehensive Street Tree Plan to guide the enhancement of the visual appeal of the City.

Goal 4. Balance the protection and support of the community and urban forest with other City strategic priorities, which include, in part, providing affordable housing, developing a walkable urban community, economic development, addressing climate change, and protecting endangered species.

Objective 4.1. Update the *Urban Forestry Management Plan* and supporting regulations regularly and ensure they work in harmony with other City strategic priorities.

Action D. Review tree preservation, landscaping, and street tree regulations regularly to ensure that they are working with other City strategic priorities, plans, and regulations, responding to changes in climate, and implementing the *Urban Forestry Management Plan*.

The Street Tree Plan update is the next step in the City's implementation of the *Urban Forestry Management Plan*. As part of this project, the City's consultant, The Watershed Company, and City staff will be working in 2023 with stakeholders and the Tree Board, Planning Commission, and City Council to update the City's Street Tree Plan and regulations (TMC 12.24 *Street Trees*), as well as review and update other relevant regulations and standards.

In addition, the City is currently updating its tree and vegetation preservation regulations (TMC 16.08) and will be updating City's landscaping regulations (TMC 18.47) this year.

3) Alternative:

☐ None.

4) Attachments:

- A. Gap Analysis
- B. Public Engagement Plan