

2015 Urban Forest & Green Space City Council Candidate Questionnaire



Name: Morgan Beach

District: 3

1. Larger trees provide significantly more ecological value to Seattle's green infrastructure, by reducing storm water runoff, cleaning pollutants from the air, and providing animal habitat. Do you support giving greater protection to large trees like Heritage Trees and exceptional trees? What measures would you propose to provide this protection?

Yes, as we add density to the city and especially District 3 we need to be conscious of protecting our tree infrastructure as a part of the equation. I would consider adding tree cover focus and green space as qualifying up-zone incentives in density expansions and maintain current heritage/exceptional tree protections.

2. Seattle's interim tree ordinance protects existing groves of trees (group of 8 or more trees 12" in diameter). The Department of Planning and Development has proposed removing this protection. Do you support continuing the policy of protecting tree groves to conserve habitat and canopy cover?

I would have to evaluate the reasoning from DPD for removing this protection and any proposed alternatives for the ordinance and impacts on both trees and development before making a firm decision on this policy.

3. Deferred maintenance results in the costly loss and replacement of trees and landscapes. Do you support funding for the maintenance of public greenspaces, including increased funding for the Green Seattle Partnership so that the goals to restore our parklands, greenbelts, and critical areas can be met?

Yes, absolutely.

4. Seattle currently has a 23 percent tree canopy cover. Seattle's Urban Forest Stewardship Plan targets a 30 percent canopy cover goal by 2037. To help reach this goal, do you support strengthening tree protection by requiring permits to remove trees on private property?

Trees are necessary and I would strongly support plans with DPD and the Parks Committee to reach our 30 % goal. I support policies requiring permits to remove trees over a certain size (heritage/exceptional), and possibly groves, but not permits for all

trees and I believe these would create unnecessary burden on creating and evaluating a permitting process and for building in the city.

*5. Seattle is one of the very few urban environments that still boasts an extensive, diverse, and impactful urban fruit tree canopy. Over the last six years, over 80,000 pounds of fruit has been gleaned from public and private property, and donated into the emergency food system. **Do you support funding to continue the maintenance of fruit trees on public land and gleaning of fruit from private property for food banks?***

Yes, City Fruit has started popping up everywhere in my neighborhood and this seems like a prime example of innovative public-non-profit partnerships to maintain diverse vegetation on public lands and help provide fresh fruit for food pantries.

*6. Seattle is one of the fastest growing cities in the United States. Over the last two years, there has been a 25 percent increase in apartment building, which often involves the destruction of single-family homes that provide open space and trees. In 2014, Seattle reports that it has 5,546 acres of designed parkland plus natural areas. The Trust for Public Lands 2014 report places Seattle's ranking among the 200 largest U.S. cities as 188th -- that's 12th from the bottom. **What do you propose to stop this loss of open space, and to increase open space in the city?***

I believe the creation of a permanent Parks District will create build a better long-term pipeline of protecting public open space and recreational facilities. I am supportive of increasing density in our urban villages and centers so that we do not continue to sprawl into the open space that is a part of our city. And as I mentioned above, I would consider adding tree cover focus and green space as qualifying up-zone incentives in density expansions.

*7. The Seattle 2035 Comprehensive Plan calls for the addition of 1400 acres of open space by 2035 to accommodate population growth. **What is your opinion of this goal? What ideas do you have to achieve this goal? Do you support this goal and saving current surplus city properties to help meet this goal?***

Yes, I think there's some great potential in repurposing some city owned land (for example, utility owned land, etc.) to create more open space. However, I believe this use of public lands needs to be balanced with the dramatic need for more affordable housing units built in District 3.

*8. Currently, the Department of Planning and Development is responsible for drafting the urban forest ordinance. **Do you support the Mayor and City Council appointing a citizens committee to prepare a draft urban forest ordinance instead, such as the Parks Legacy Committee and Parks and Green Spaces Citizens' Advisory Committee?***

As a current appointed City Commissioner on the Seattle Women's Commission, I know the relationship between city staff and appointed officials well. Because of the amount of time, access to expertise and comprehensive planning this ordinance deserves, I support DPD consulting and presenting the plan to these committees for feedback and approval, but the responsibility for the drafting the plan I believe should be on DPD.

*9. The Department of Planning and Development is proposing to reduce the current long-term tree canopy aspirational goal in the Seattle Comprehensive Plan from 40 percent to 30 percent. **Do you support maintaining the 40 percent long-term goal in the Seattle 2035 Comprehensive Plan?***

I support the DPD and many stakeholders who contributed to it, myself included, and their realistic aspirations based on a strong emphasis of maintaining parks and open space as a park of our city versus the amount of land that can be acquired and converted to usable open space.

*10. Trees and open space offer a number of community benefits: increased housing values; decreased rates of crime; offering protection against climate change; filtering stormwater run-off; and quality of life for communities. **Share with us your favorite tree or memory of an open space and why you support continued investment in these community resources.***

My brother and I had a 40 foot tall trio of aspen trees in our front yard growing up in Colorado. We spent hours in those trees, playing in imaginary pirate ship lookouts, boa constrictor infested jungles, or any other number of places we could come up with. And we fell out of them to my mom's continued consternation after we ignore her directives to be safe while playing in the trees. Forest, parks and open space was a prominent and consistent part of our life growing up (my brother's first word was in fact, "tree"), and access to both an urban environment and open space is a major part of the reason I chose to make Seattle my home over other growing cities with access to good jobs like LA or DC. While some of my answers above here may seem less than 100% all for protecting our trees, I assure you this is a major part of my focus on our built environment as we invest in infrastructure and a top priority for building our city and keeping it green in every way possible.

Please add any clarifications or comments you would like to convey to us regarding the questions above, or on protecting trees and the urban forest and open space in general.

Are you willing to meet briefly with representatives from TreePAC, at a time and place that is mutually convenient?

Yes.

Thank you for your participation!

Please return questionnaire by July 15 to treepac@comcast.net.