

2015 Urban Forest & Green Space  
City Council Candidate Questionnaire

Name: Abel Pacheco

District: 4

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?

In principle I support efforts to improve our environment, protect our green spaces and limit pollution. However, I'd like to talk to all stakeholders to see what policy we can advance to achieve our desired and shared goals. Decisions regarding environmental policy have far reaching effects and we need to consider the perspectives of all members who will be impacted. However, protecting our environment remains one of my top priorities.

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?

Yes. This is another step we must take to preserving our city's valuable canopy cover. As our city grows, there is added pressure to sacrifice our urban forest in the name of development. We must reject this pressure and instead renew our commitment to protecting and preserving the environment.

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. We need to fully commit to maintaining and preserving our city's greenspaces. This means we need to allocate sufficient resources for maintenance and upkeep of our precious parks and vegetation. Measures like the Green Seattle Partnership are important steps toward maintaining and improving our urban forest and green space.

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?

Yes, but the process should be streamlined. While speaking with voters in our area, I've heard several concerns around permitting delays. We need to ensure people are able to acquire these permits in a timely manner. Additionally, we should be searching for other ways to increase canopy coverage. The construction of a lid over I-5 is one way in which we can dramatically increase our tree canopy coverage.

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. The upkeep and maintenance of fruit trees is a win-win. Maintaining these fruit trees provide for an aesthetically pleasing city as well as assistance our neighbors in need. The costs of maintenance are well worth the benefits to our community.

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?

While the tremendous growth of our city provides numerous opportunities, it also puts a strain on our parks and natural spaces. We need to be deliberate in our efforts to protect and preserve our open spaces by setting aside more space as our city grows, fighting calls to reduce or limit our park space and ensuring sufficient funding and resources for park maintenance.

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?

I support this goal. We need to increase the amount of open space in our city. There are a number of ways in which we can increase the amount of open space available to members of our community. Constructing a lid on I-5 would open up more area for housing and transportation as well as parks, trees and natural space. Through mandates, incentives and other strategies, we can meet and even surpass this ambitious goal.

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?

We should establish a joint committee to tackle this issue. It is important to get input from the community when considering urban forest ordinances. We need to engage the community and ensure that the ordinances are beneficial for all stakeholders.

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?

While I remain committed to increasing amount of tree canopy coverage, this is an area that needs more study. Reaching the 40 percent goal should be possible, but it will require a full commitment to investing in expanding our tree canopy and identifying new solutions.

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.

When I was a graduate student at the University of Washington, my friends and I would ride our bikes to Gas Works Park from Wedgwood and read our books. It was the ideal environment to relax, read and rest. We need to protect our sacred open spaces so that future generations will enjoy the parks we all know and love.

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.

Thank you for the opportunity to share my views with the members of TreePAC. I am committed to protecting our parks, our trees and the great biodiversity we enjoy and depend upon in Seattle.

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

Yes! I look forward to speaking with the members of TreePAC.

Thank you for your participation!  
Please return questionnaire by July 15 to [info@treepac.org](mailto:info@treepac.org).