

# 2015 Urban Forest & Green Space City Council Candidate Questionnaire



Name: Sandy Brown

District: 5

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, I support greater protection to Heritage and exceptional trees. Seattle is called "The Emerald City" because of the place of trees in our cityscape. Their role in our well-being is well documented. We're blessed to have trees here that are as old as our city, and many that must be much, much older. These trees should be afforded the protection of a permitting system that carries steep fines for their callous destruction. A strong fee system for tree removal will also help us maintain our tree canopy. "Question: When is the best time to plant a tree? Answer: Fifty years ago!" Let's protect trees from generations past so that we pass on to our children and grandchildren a green and vibrant city.*

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. These groves cannot realistically be replaced and should continue to be protected by the ordinance. I would not support the proposal to remove this protection for groves and would encourage DPD to find other solutions to growth concerns that conserve habitat and maintain our canopy cover.*

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. Deferred maintenance carries a high price, so maintenance of our public and natural areas should be a high priority for the city. Some people believe that forests and greenspaces can exist without maintenance, but it is vital, for instance, that we clear forests of invasive plants that can reduce animal habitat and kill large trees. Walking through Carkeek Park it is very clear which forest areas have been adequately maintained by the public and which areas, under private ownership, have been left to the encroachment of English Ivy and other harmful plants. Let's fully fund maintenance of our public greenbelts, parklands and other areas to preserve and protect them for ours and future generations.*

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. Strong action for preservation and extension of our tree canopy is important. This is a community goal that makes sense for Seattle and I will work hard to fulfill it through strong and smart legislation.*

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. I'm delighted with our fruit gleaning projects and I will work to fund maintenance of our fruit trees as needed. It may not be clear to some, but fruit trees require constant attention in order to be healthy and productive. We can do a favor to private fruit tree owners by using our public fruit tree stock as a teaching model for how to care for fruit trees on private property.*

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?**

*Open space is vital to a healthy city and, sadly, acquisition of additional park land is extremely expensive. We recognize this in North Seattle in particular since NE Seattle recently lost its only beach access through litigation. I've worked with beach neighbors at NE 130<sup>th</sup> Street beach to return this property to public hands and we have succeeded in generating a petition*

*with 2700 signatures that spurred unanimous support by the City Council for the Mayor to use eminent domain to return the property to public hands.*

*We also recently lost the Cedar Park playground to repurposing by Seattle Public Schools into a school playground. This makes far NE Seattle desert for parks and open space. As density increases, we need to generate more greenspace in order to improve the quality of life.*

*One important idea is creation of a "Village Green" in central Lake City, just east of 30<sup>th</sup> Ave NE, that would serve as a rare green oasis in a concrete jungle. We are working with the Pierre family auto dealers, City of Seattle, and others to put the project together. We'll need wide community support, including that of TreePAC, to make it happen. We have high hopes that this and other park acquisitions can be accomplished through our new MPD. As a city council member I'll be a watchdog on this new government entity to be certain we are increasing our inventory of great parks and greenspaces for our city.*

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?**

*This is a great goal, and one that would benefit all of Seattle if met. Current city surplus properties would likely play a large role in meeting the goal, as their conversion to parks and open spaces would contribute greatly to the acreage target. The purchasing of vacant land, when good deals appear, would also be a way to boost open spaces. Additional open space can be secured as the downtown waterfront is developed following the removal of the elevated viaduct. Lastly, more trees and can be added along roadways that see reduced traffic due to transit improvements and street ends and pocket parks can be developed with smartly targeted resources.*

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?**

*Sadly, our city government too often undervalues the contribution of volunteers. Key city staffers should gather tree, park and greenspace stakeholders together and facilitate a public process from which a broadly supported urban forest ordinance would emerge. This will be stronger with community leadership, not weaker. Let's put our great civic volunteers who support our trees, parks and forests to work making an ordinance that enhances our tree canopy and improves our quality of life.*

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?**

*Yes, we should be ambitious with our goals for promoting a healthy environment. Reducing the target for this goal reflects an unwise push for short-term needs over long-term health and community well-being.*

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.**

*Trees symbolize the generosity of nature. They provide habitat to countless organisms, buffer us from the harsher aspects of nature, and even clean the air we breathe. Their slow growth and susceptibility to plunder remind us to value sustainability and conservation to avoid the fate of deforestation seen in other places.*

*I grew up in Seattle and my family's back yard contained legacy fruit trees from an orchard that had been in that same location for many decades prior. As a child I watched as, in a single day, fruit trees in an adjacent property were destroyed to make way for a large apartment building. This made me value even more our plum tree, apple tree, crabapple tree, and pear tree. Largest of these was the pear tree, and my mother every year canned pear sauce made from the tree's very ample fruit. I swung from the tree's branches as a child and climbed it to find a few moments of solitude among its leaves. The tree was a blessing, as trees are, and I hope my grandchildren will be blessed with a fruitful and healthy tree to keep them company in their childhood!*

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?

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