

2015 Urban Forest & Green Space City Council Candidate Questionnaire



Name: Catherine Weatbrook

District: Seattle City Council District 6.

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?** Greater protection without an effective means of reporting and enforcement is a waste of time. We need a 24x7 reporting phone line and web form that is monitored during all daylight hours. Since DPD has proven unwilling to enforce regulations, that enforcement needs to be moved to a different department.

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, and I urge that the existing protections be supported through responsive enforcement.

3. Deferred maintenance results in the costly loss and replacement of trees and landscapes. **Do you support funding for the maintenance of public green spaces, 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 is always a false savings both in dollar terms and in terms of a healthy canopy. I have pulled ivy and other invasive species, planted trees, removed garbage, and otherwise actively participated in the restoration of our green spaces, and I recognize that funding is vital to continue to support efforts like this.

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?** We have existing rules

regarding the removal of trees on private property. <http://www.seattle.gov/dpd/codesrules/codes/treeprotection/default.htm> I'm unclear as to the objective of requiring a permit for rules unless we change our entire approach to permits, fees and enforcement.

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, and I would like to bring in youth training and horticulture programs so we can train and inspire a new generation of fruit tree stewards.

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?** We need a cultural shift in city departments to one that actively values open space, rather than the build it all approach we now have. Allowed designs leave no space for trees to survive, and in fact provide only chopped up exterior space that is useless, if any space at all is provided.

We also have to move away from the "build it to the maximum envelope" approach that all our building follows, which also makes the buildings less affordable. Parks, must include trees, and dead trees need to be promptly replaced.

I will work to have lost street trees replaced within 2 years of their loss - in Crown Hill we've been waiting for 12 years now to have many trees replaced for which the city was given insurance money from the accidents that wiped them out, and yet we still wait. We need to encourage real green walls, and other innovative ways of creating green spaces in our city. We will need changes to building

codes, we will need to figure out how to use roof tops as more public open space, we will need to figure out if some buildings in particular locations could be built somewhat taller, with a forever protection of public green space around them.

We need to go back to when great big old homes were available for multiple families, at affordable prices, and kept the surrounding trees in place.

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?** Any city/school/department owned property needs to be kept for public use, in including open space. I think we need to work towards that goal of 1,400 acres. I think we need to look at options on rooftops for open space, including roof top p-patches like New York City has. Rebuilding some of the public piers that we have over the water is another possible space. We're going to have to buy land too, and that will mean looking at the MPD funding structure. There is still federally owned property around Discovery Park, and we should be looking at that too. The waterfront park will be part of the solution, but it's too hard for much of Seattle to get there, so the parks need to be spread out around the city.

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?** I think there must be a representative group from the broader community to participate in the drafting of the ordinance that works transparently.

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, I support leaving the goal of 40%.

10. Trees and open space offer a number of community benefits: increased housing values; decreased rates of crime; offering protection against climate change; filtering storm water 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.** I remember many trips to the Arboretum. First as a 5 or 6 year old, running through the trees playing hide-and-seek and tag. In middle school I remember walking the wetland trails there and pulling up a water sample for an earth science project and discovering frog and fish eggs right there. It's a location that provided discovery every time I went. I think it's crucial that we maintain access to those opportunities in the city so that future generations can learn from the environment without traveling out of the city.

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 info@treepac.org.