

2015 Urban Forest & Green Space City Council Candidate Questionnaire



Name: Bill Bradburd

District: Position 9 – at-large

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. First, there needs to be an expansion of the tree inventory to include privately owned trees. To facilitate this and other needed improvements in urban forest conservation, all aspects of tree monitoring and management should be coordinated by a single agency, perhaps the Office of Sustainability and Environment. DPD and SDOT need to be engaged in critical analyses and enforcement activities, but neither has the appropriate mission and culture to lead the effort. I would work with all urban forest stakeholders to draft legislation to empower the Urban Forestry Commission to prepare legislation improving the entire structure of the City’s urban forestry provisions in the SMC. Provisions concerning protection of large trees (Heritage and Exceptional trees, including groves) is one of the primary issues that needs to be addressed in that code overhaul. I would seek to ensure that trees on private property are protected as much as possible (see 4 below). I will also ensure that our Comprehensive Plan goals and policies related to the urban forest are also protected!

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, not only continued, but improved! (See answer to 1 above.)

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, I support providing additional funding to maintain our greenspaces; it is clear that funding to date has been inadequate. The Parks District plans to allocate almost \$4 million a year to the “New Waterfront Park”; I would use that as a potential source of increased funding and use downtown resources to support the Waterfront Park.

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; Seattle's tree conservation ordinance is very weak. DPD has not adequately responded to Council's request to address this issue. We should consider use of incentives such as utility rate reductions, property tax adjustments, and other strategies to encourage retention of trees on private property. Particularly for people interested in removal of trees for solar or backyard garden opportunities, I will explore a program to offset that with community solar or garden patches as a means to protect extant trees.

Beyond increasing the prescriptive provisions requiring conservation of exceptional trees, property owners should be provided incentives to protect existing trees and groves. In the lowrise zone, this means replacing much of the "green factor" with more tree-oriented incentives, and revisiting setback requirements for some building types.

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?**

Absolutely. We have a wonderful climate for growing fruit in residential neighborhoods. The City should be encouraging the increased cultivation and care of these trees and harvesting of the food for use, especially by food banks. I support efforts such as the Beacon Food Forest to produce community food sources. I would like to see many parks (edges of parks) adopt this sort of project which not only produces food, but builds 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?**

Seattle needs to implement development impact fees immediately. Impact fees would be used to purchase additional park and open spaces. Most of the loss of tree canopy and open space to apartments has been in the lowrise zones, facilitated by "green factor" provisions added to the zoning code in 2010. These provisions should be assessed and revisited, with a view toward replacing them with provisions that provide real, usable open space, not just greenery on tall apartment walls or behind fences. I also would seek to strengthen the natural areas policies in order to restrict the use of natural areas for recreation.

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 support this goal (and possibly increasing the target). As Seattle experiences rapid growth, we need to make sure parks and open space keep up with the demand to ensure our quality of life does not suffer. Development impact fees are needed to add to whatever sources of revenue can be found. Surplus City property should not be sold unless it is expressly for purposes of using the funds to buy larger parcels for open space/parks, or for the construction of low-income housing. Particularly as climate change affects become more prominent, an increased tree canopy will be necessary to combat the 'heat island' affect.

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?**

Yes, with the caveat the many appointed committees in Seattle do not fairly represent the range of interests who should be involved. One of my main platforms is to ensure that advisory and policy committee appointments actually reflect the demographic, geographic, and political diversity of Seattle. Protecting the integrity of the makeup of the Parks Board, the Urban Forestry Commission and the Planning Commission will be of immediate focus.

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 am not sure; the 2013 Urban Forest Stewardship Plan indicates Seattle has less than 25% coverage now, and that increasing that amount significantly could be difficult and even conflict with other beneficial open space activities, like urban gardens (p-patches, and on private lots) and solar power. I favor rigorous monitoring and study of our urban forest while we improve ordinances such as described in 1, 4, 6 and 7 above, and assigning the Urban Forestry Commission of determining whether the goal should be adjusted. In the meantime, unless there is compelling evidence that the public interest would be furthered by a reduction in the goal, it should not be reduced.

That said, I will seek to ensure that we always maximize our urban forest, tree protections and natural storm water permeability options.

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.

I grew up in Chicago and near our home we had a natural area. The mystery of this space – its tall trees, darkness on a sunny day, meandering trails, and variety of flora and fauna not seen anywhere else – made a great impression on me. As I grew older and participated in the Boy Scouts, I had the opportunity to get out of the city and into larger natural areas and to begin getting a greater understanding of this world and how it exists through ‘merit badges’. This led to me as an adult seeking hiking and backpacking as a form of escape from the stark “unnaturalness” of the city and formed the basis of my environmentalism and values.

Seattle’s parks spaces only include about 10% natural area (compared to San Francisco’s 50%). We need to ensure that we protect, and grow if possible, natural areas in the city. Not only do these spaces provide an important urban ecosystem, they are the seeds of and connection to our natural world.

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.

I am honored to be personally endorsed by several notable tree advocates including John Barber, Michael Oxman, Cass Turnbull, Ruth Williams and Toby Thaler.

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

Yes, of course.

***Thank you for your participation!
Please return questionnaire by July 15 to info@treepac.org.***