

2015 Urban Forest & Green Space
City Council Candidate Questionnaire



Name:

District:

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?**

Generally, I am supportive of protections for healthy Heritage Trees and exceptional trees as I understand their definition in Seattle. As we grow in Seattle and fight against growth that adversely impacts natural areas and the environment beyond the borders of our city – notably in rural and forested areas east of Seattle – I think it is important to not “lose sight of the forest for the trees,” so to speak, and ensure that we are not enacting policies that encourage exurban sprawl, while protecting and expanding our tree canopy in Seattle.

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?**

As a member of the Parks Legacy Committee, I was part of a group that provided greater funding for preservation of urban tree canopy, urban forests, as well as expansion of both. Our urban forests – such as Ravenna Woods – are a vital part of what keeps our city amazing, and ensuring that we concentrate growth in a way that does not require demolition of these lands are policies I would be supportive of.

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?

Referring back to question 2, the six year plan of the Park District includes funding with a priority on “asset management” a/k/a major maintenance. Not just built structures, but natural environments. The original plan out of committee included a significant investment to meet the promise of the City's work with GSP, and I will be supportive of adequate funding for our green spaces as a member of council.

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?**

I would have to see a specific bill, and how such a move would intersect with our growth needs and what mitigating steps could be taken on that front. I am supportive of taller, skinnier buildings instead of short, lot-line to lot-line construction, in large part because I believe this is a way to ensure more tree canopy (and I don't think I need to go into the health benefits of tree canopy), as well as tree replacement on-site or near-site when trees are removed for development, which I believe are good mitigating steps in the event a specific tree on private property is obstructing the ability to build in an urban core. At the same time, removal of trees – especially well established trees – for the purpose of views is something that concerns me greatly, particularly in areas that have need for more tree canopy.

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?**

We have in place some excellent partnerships that I believe must continue to see support from the city. Having been part of the group that secured permanent, stable funding for parks in Seattle, I am proud of the work I have done to ensure that these partnerships can continue.

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?**

There is no doubt that we need more housing in Seattle (particularly family-size housing). However, I believe that parks, open spaces, and urban forests are the back yards for our multifamily developments. The idea that people should be expected to reside in boxes to get on boxes to work in boxes sounds less than ideal, and is adverse the livability that I believe must come with affordability. I have long been a supporter of funding neighborhood park development with this understanding, and remain of that mentality.

As we move forward with how we grow, and what that looks like, I'll come to the table with neighborhoods not just with a top-down approach, but a series of ideas to start a conversation about what the growth and amenities we will require look like – many of which will be 100% cribbed from ideas I've heard on the trail. Parks, P-Patches, walkable neighborhoods, trees to cool and clean the air – these are all things that will ensure a high quality of life, and, frankly, bring neighbors together in multifamily structures. There are many good examples of density cohabitating with parks and open spaces, and I know we can emulate those appropriately if we are willing to.

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?**

There is no doubt we will need more open space as we grow. How the interplay of open space meets with our growth and affordability needs will be a conversation that we as a city need to have. There are many instances where it makes sense for surplus properties to be converted to parks and open spaces, but there are instances where mixed use of affordable housing for individuals not served by other programs and open spaces may make more sense. But, referring back to question 6, it is important to keep this aspect of livability as we grow, which is an area I have experience impacting in a positive way.

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 am a fan of community committees, and would support a community committee being put together to make recommendations in conjunction with work being done by DPD and Parks.

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 do not have enough information to respond to this question, and would need to review documentation and briefing to understand the rationale on both sides before taking a firm position.

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.**

Having been all across the city for pleasure, as well as for public policy purposes, I see the difference that having quality parks and open spaces makes in neighborhoods. I am proud of being a leader on investment in parks, urban forests, and opens spaces in Seattle, and would continue to do the same. As we grow up as a city, it will continue to be vital to ensure we have the backyard spaces necessary to maintain quality of life, while also supporting our environmental values. I want my daughter to be able to afford to live here, and want to live here because it is a beautiful city, and will continue my commitment to keeping it that way as we grow.

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.