

2015 Urban Forest & Green Space City Council Candidate Questionnaire



Name: Shannon Braddock

District: District 1 (West Seattle & South Park)

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 the city providing greater protection to large trees like Heritage Trees and exceptional trees. While it is important that the city pass measures protecting our trees and greenspaces in general, getting more specific and differentiating/prioritizing protection for trees that provide more ecological value to the city is something I would be proud to advocate for. I have extensive experience at the King County Council dealing with policy issues and frankly, delving into policy minutia is something I enjoy and excel at. Although I don't have specific ideas for measures to provide more protection for Heritage and exceptional trees off-hand it is an issue I am excited to learn more about and I look forward to working with the TreePAC to craft related policy.

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

It is important to recognize that our tree groves/canopy cover is not simply a luxury, it is one of the keys to the high quality of life that our residents enjoy. Seattle is the fastest growing major city in the United States and many of our neighborhoods – especially in District 1 – are changing at a rapid pace which shows no signs of abating. We need to prioritize the conservation of habitat and canopy cover so that everyone

has the opportunity to enjoy ‘the Emerald City’ – even if they don’t have their own backyard. I support continuing the policy of protecting tree groves and habitat 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

I support funding for the maintenance of public greenspaces. One important public policy truism is that it is always better to make the right decisions on design and maintenance rather than go back and try to fix things at a future date – which almost always the more costly option. In that vein, we need to ensure that our existing parks receive long overdue maintenance upgrades and that projects which have been in planning stages for years are completed.

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?**

While I certainly support Seattle’s Urban Forest Stewardship Plan to reach a 30 percent canopy cover we must recognize that that requiring permits to remove trees on private property will stir a contentious debate over private property rights vs. the public good.

As Chief of Staff for King County Councilmember Joe McDermott, I have a long history of constituent engagement in a district represented system. There is always a tension between people who do not want change and those who want better outcomes for their neighborhood and city. As a city councilmember the first thing I would do is to make sure that the constituent outreach is robust and well thought out. Too often, we only hear from a small portion of the public who can attend public meetings and are generally either strongly in support or opposition to a change. It is important not to present decisions as already made downtown, but to genuinely seek public input. The stronger foundation you build in the community during public outreach, the better the end outcome is likely to be. As a councilmember, I would ask for good information on all changes so I could better answer concerns. For example, I would want to see a survey of available opinions on the proposed permit changes. This is important information for me in supporting a project so that I could identify and separate valid concerns from those who simply don't want change. As a

councilmember I would be active in all stages of project development. I would gather input throughout the process, but when it comes to making tough decisions I would not try to make everyone 100% happy, but to meet the best mix of multiple needs.

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 support funding to continue the maintenance of fruit trees on public land and the gleaning of fruit from private property for food banks. As a former board member of the West Seattle Food Bank, I am aware of the great benefits of this work. This is a situation where it is not only good policy but also economically and socially sound. I am a strong supporter of robust human services and environmental protection so this policy is something I would be proud to advocate for and expand upon.

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 live in the greatest city in the country and it's only natural that people are relocating here to take advantage of our booming economy and high quality of life. However, rapid growth requires thoughtful policy making. We must make decisions that preserve the quality of life that brought people to the city in the first place. That means preserving and expanding the greenspaces and parks in our city. I am open to a wide variety of policy tools to redress the loss of open spaces, including exploring the use of impact fees to fund the development of parks and other open spaces. It is only fair that developers and new residents help to defray the cost required to keep the Emerald City emerald.

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 the Comprehensive Plan goal of adding 1400 acres of open space by 2035. It is important to recognize that this is an ambitious plan and it will require serious, long-term strategic thinking and immediate action if it is to be achieved. I am interested in pursuing the idea of using surplus Seattle Light substations as locations to build parks as well as exploring the use of impact fees to fund open spaces. I support saving current city properties to help meet the 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?**

Yes

I support the Mayor and City Council appointing a citizens committee to prepare a draft urban forest ordinance. This idea dovetails nicely with my leadership style and governance philosophy which is based on collaboration and coalition building and bringing as many stakeholders to the table as possible. Again, it is imperative not to present decisions as already made downtown, but to genuinely seek public input from activists, citizens, experts and other key 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?**

Yes – Again, Tree Canopy is not a luxury, it is a key component of livable and thriving Seattle. This is certainly an opportunity for a citizens committee to review that recommendation.

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.**

My favorite memory of an open space is actually from my childhood and one I'm hoping is being replicated in my children's' lives. I grew up in Bellingham, WA within blocks of both Broadway Park and Cornwall Park. These were very different spaces. Broadway Park was smaller, but very open and Cornwall was a more wooded area. Each of these places played significant roles in my upbringing. As a child I went to these parks with my parents and as I grew up I went with my friends to play recreational games, hike, run and pack picnic lunches. It isn't really one memory, but rather several that made up a childhood of climbing trees, rolling down hills, creating 'rivers' when it rained and playing games. These were places of outdoor refuge. My children live very near Schmitz Park and Hiawatha – two spaces offering similar opportunities and I'm so happy knowing they take advantage of those opportunities.

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.