

# 2015 Urban Forest & Green Space City Council Candidate Questionnaire



Name: Tony Provine

District: 4

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. Heritage trees and exceptional trees deserve greater protection and should be inventoried and registered. These trees should not be removed or placed at risk because of development. The City Arborist should be consulted before a determination may be made to remove a heritage or exceptional tree or to allow development activities nearby. A permit should be required before trees can be removed.**

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.**

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.**

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. I support a stronger tree protection ordinance for Seattle, including requiring permits for cutting trees on private property. We must protect more trees from being removed by development. Current city code and the proposed**

**new city tree code do not include any requirements for tree mitigation when a tree is removed on private property. Also, private lots undergoing development have a variety of tree requirements and/or must meet the new 'green factor' requirements that do specify a certain amount of tree cover or vegetation after the development is completed. In addition to determining whether a tree can be removed, another advantage of requiring a permit to cut a tree is the ability to track tree cutting over time, review trends, and if we are losing tree canopy, make adjustments to the regulations.**

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.**

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?**

**The Comprehensive Plan for the City of Seattle includes a goal for open space (inside Urban Villages) to have 1 acre of open space for every 1,000 people. We know that parks and open spaces contribute to the character and livability of a neighborhood. All too often property is deemed too valuable to be developed as a park or open space – the argument some espouse to add housing instead of the little park by Roosevelt High School is an example. The lot is simply too small under current zoning for a housing tower, but is perfectly suited for a small patch of park. When I am elected, I will require that these areas be included by design in neighborhood plans and given serious consideration as a priority for each community.**

**In the center of the University District, a rapidly growing Urban Center in District 4 where new transit stations are being built, the lack of open space is more critical. In the heart of the University District near University Way and NE 43<sup>rd</sup> Street, residents have sought the creation of a public plaza open space area for several years. The initial plan developed by UDistrictSquare.org called for the space to be located above the nearby Sound Transit station which, except for entrances, will be entirely underground. Other alternatives were developed which make use of intersections nearby with streets closed to vehicular traffic to create the public**

square. The significantly increased density and taller buildings in this area need to be balanced with open space. To make increased density successful, a quality environment is essential: public open space in the center of the neighborhood, improved pedestrian and bike amenities, parklets and other changes to the neighborhood are needed in combination with increased density. As a neighborhood leader (Co-Chair of the Northeast District Council of neighborhoods), I represented the unanimous support of our organizations for this plan and as the first District 4 City Council member, I will continue to be a strong advocate for this proposal.

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 goal is modest compared to other cities, but we need to make it a priority to increase the livability of all areas within our city. I support this goal and the use of current surplus properties to help us attain it.**

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. We need a citizen committee to do the work to ensure broad and diverse representation and to provide more accountability and oversight of the process.**

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. The 40 percent goal must be maintained. Our tree canopy contributes to a healthier environment and a better quality of life for all of us.**

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.**

**Ravenna Park is a nearby community treasure, once the home of many old growth trees. Their presence can still be felt throughout the park where their**

**destruction is evident. It is a place of hope, inspiration and renewal -- wonderful, natural, and wild – located within our urban area.**

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](mailto:treepac@comcast.net).***