

FACT SHEET

Petition to Review the Seattle Tree Protection Ordinance 126821 With the State of Washington Growth Management Hearing Board

The Petition to Review was filed on Wednesday, August 9, 2023 with the State of Washington Growth Management Hearing Board (GMHB). The petition requested the GMHB to review the Seattle Tree Protection Ordinance 126821 (Ordinance), passed on May 23, 2023, to:

1. Meet the City's Comprehensive Plan goals as required by the WA Growth Management Act (GMA);
2. Amend Tree Ordinance 126821 so that Seattle is able to increase its tree canopy to 30% by 2037 and to 40% over time;
3. Update its 2022 analysis of the environmental impacts of the Ordinance to include the impact of 2023 City amendments and new state laws.

The Petition requested a review of the following issues:

1. The City of Seattle's 2035 Comprehensive Plan (Comprehensive Plan) requires the City to "strive to increase citywide tree canopy coverage to 30 percent by 2037 and to 40 percent over time." However, data from the 2021 Tree Canopy Report shows an overall loss of canopy of 1.7% relative to 2016. While the stated goal of the Ordinance and Seattle's Comprehensive Plan is to increase canopy, the adopted Ordinance will contribute to further canopy loss.

The Comprehensive Plan requires that the City promote the care and retention of trees and groups of trees that enhance Seattle's historical, cultural, recreational, environmental, and aesthetic character. Provisions of the Ordinance are not consistent with these requirements.

The Comprehensive Plan requires that the City encourage preservation and expansion of tree canopy throughout the city, with priority given to areas with the least tree canopy, which are also neighborhoods impacted by racial and economic injustice. The Tree Canopy Report shows that these areas are losing canopy faster than other areas of the city. While the Ordinance prioritizes tree planting in areas with less canopy, its provisions will not adequately protect existing canopy in these neighborhoods.

The Comprehensive Plan requires that, in its efforts to protect trees, the City recognize their value in managing stormwater, reducing pollution, and reducing the impact of heat islands. Provisions of the Ordinance fail to do so.

FACT SHEET

5. The Comprehensive Plan requires that the City develop regulations that minimize lot clearing and ensure creative designs to retain mature trees. The Ordinance fails to do so.
6. City and state laws ensure public participation in developing Ordinances. The City failed to seek prior recommendations and review from the Urban Forestry Commission (UFC) before releasing the final batch of 48 amendments, as required by City Ordinance. The City also gave the UFC less than two days to review these amendments prior to the Land Use Committee vote.
The City also failed to give the general public adequate time to review and
7. respond to amendments to the Ordinance.
The new Ordinance includes substantial changes from a former version. These
8. changes will have a significant adverse environmental impact. However, the City did not withdraw a previous determination of non-significance (DNS) and issue a new determination of the ordinance's impact. This violates city and state laws.

The Petition was filed on behalf of three Seattle community-based organizations:

- TreePAC
- Trees and People Coalition
- Duwamish Valley Neighborhood Preservation Coalition

As of September 14, 2023, the Petition has support from the Beacon Hill Council, Don't Clearcut Seattle, Faith Action Climate Team, Friends of Seattle's Urban Forest, Seattle Green Spaces Coalition, The Last 6000, and Tree Action Seattle.