

CITY STAFF INTERVIEWS



PURPOSE

To understand existing internal infrastructure and processes around tree management, and to further define areas of further investigation for the USFS Urban Forest Sustainability and Management Audit.

Phase 1 Research Summary, Tacoma Urban Forest Plan

8 - City Staff Interviews

山戸 ELEMENT #2: CITY STAFF INTERVIEWS

To understand existing internal infrastructure and processes around tree management, to define areas of further investigation, and to establish a shared vision for this Plan.

PROCESS

The UF Team met with City staff in early May 2019 to discuss the interactions and operations relating to urban forestry throughout City departments. Interviews were organized into six staff groups, based on the structure of City departments, divisions, and work groups, and the understanding of their existing and potential influences on the urban forest:

- 1) Operations, Tree Hazards, & Risk Management
- 2) Planning & Design
- 3) Data & Information Technology
- 4) Outreach, Communication, & Marketing
- 5) Neighborhood Revitalization
- 6) City Code, Policies, & Standards

A total of 10 different departments or offices were represented at the meetings and a total of 25 Work Groups were interviewed. These Work Groups are listed in the meeting summaries below. The departments or offices represented include:

- Neighborhood & Community Services Department (NCS)
- City Attorney (Legal)
- Public Works Department (PWD)
- Planning & Development Services Department (PDS)
- Environmental Services Department (EnvScs)
- Information Technology Department (IT)
- City Manager's Office (CMO)
- Office of Equity & Human Rights (OEHR)
- Office of Arts & Cultural Vitality
- Community & Economic Development Department (CED)

An overview of the Departments, Divisions, and Work Groups represented at each of the interviews and meetings is represented below. Comprehensive notes were recorded for each meeting and these notes were synthesized. A summary of recurring themes, resource needs, and workflow gaps identified during the interviews are provided below. In addition, the existing workflows and structure of City departments is provided.

Table 2. Summary of departments and work groups represented at project interviews

Department/Division	Work Group
NCS Code Enforcement	General/Nuisance Codes
NCS Community Based Services	Neighborhood Enhancement Team
City Attorney (Legal)	Civil Division
PWD Street Operations	Grounds Maintenance
EnvScs	Urban Forestry
2) Planning and Design Interviews	
PDS Site & Building	Site Review
PWD Engineering	Traffic Programs
	Engineering
	Street Design
	Sidewalk Program
	ADA Services
EnvScs	Urban Forestry
3) Data and Information Technology Int	erviews
EnvScs Science & Engineering	Technical & Business Operations
IT Information Technology	GIS Service
PWD Street Operations	Grounds Maintenance
EnvScs	Urban Forestry
4) Outreach, Communication, and Marketing Interviews	
OEHR	OEHR
CMO	Media & Communications
СМО	Media & Communications Customer Support Center (311)
CMO PWD Engineering	Media & Communications Customer Support Center (311) Traffic Programs
CMO PWD Engineering EnvScs	Media & Communications Customer Support Center (311) Traffic Programs Office of Environmental Policy & Sustainability
CMO PWD Engineering EnvScs	Media & Communications Customer Support Center (311) Traffic Programs Office of Environmental Policy & Sustainability Urban Forestry
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Existing City Workflows and Operations

Based on the City staff interviews, existing workflows and operations were extensively detailed. Potential gaps, resource needs, inconsistencies, and conflicting workflows were identified in the process. The following diagram provides a summary of these operations, noted concerns, and recurring themes. The diagram provides a very broad description of the processes relating to trees though actual workflows are more intricate and complex.

Figure 2. Overview of the existing operations and workflows for trees in the rights-of-way



Workflow Improvements

 Tree Inspections: Inspectors are lacking arboricultural and tree risk assessment expertise. The on-call 3rd party inspector isn't local, resulting in long review turnarounds.
 Permit System: Inconsistent or unclear procedures, workflows, roles, and responsibility.
 Tree Maintenance Decision: Need consistent/enforced tree maintenance guidelines.
 Tracking: Lack of consistent tracking of requests, trees, and action in City's tree software.
 Illegal Tree Removal: Lack of heritage tree program or tree preservation enforcement.
 City Tree Maintenance: Reactive maintenance, limited resources, inconsistent maintenance approach. Lacking a clear understanding of City-maintained areas.

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Figure 3. Overview of the existing operations and workflows regarding trees and construction



7 -Permitting Process: Unclear roles and responsibilities in the permitting process.
8 -Utility ROW Projects: Permitting gaps exist for other government utility projects.
9 -City ROW Projects: Gaps exist in the permitting process for PWD projects in the ROW.
10 -Single-Family Land Use Development: Improvements can be made to tree requirements.
11 -Compliance: Gaps in policy existing for enforcement of compliance and penalties.
12 -Landscape Plan Review: Need ongoing training of department staff on tree-related issues.
13 -Fulfillment of Landscape Plan: Lack of resources to follow-up on project installation, aftercare of trees, and survival of newly planted trees even though a bond is in place.

UFM = Urban Forest Manual, TMC = Tacoma Municipal Code, ROW = Rights-of-Way City Departments of Environmental Services (EnvScs), Planning & Development Services (PDS), Public Works (PWD), Neighborhood & Community Services (NCS), Community & Economic Development (CED), City Manager's Office (CMO), Office of Equity & Human Rights (OEHR) ADA = Americans with Disabilities Act SDEV = Commercial Site Development

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Recurring needs identified during workgroup discussions and City staff interviews that are within the scope of the Plan's strategies are listed below:

- Development or improvement of Standard Operating Procedures and workflows, to include issues like hazard tree evaluation, permit/plan review, capital project design, enforcement, and notification.
- Provide clarity on roles and responsibilities (City and public) regarding urban trees.
- Establish, revise, or clarify current permitting processes and triggers.
- Provide City staff training regarding Urban Forestry and tree management.
- Provide urban forestry resources/informational materials for City staff, property owners, developers, and occupants.
- Provide internal technical support, such as a City Arborist to support multiple departments and workgroups including hazard tree evaluation, permit/plan review, capital project design, and code enforcement.
- Identify priority "tree corridors" for City resource allocation, invest in tree maintenance, and identify planting opportunities.
- Develop and implement a voluntary heritage/historic tree program and protection regulations.
- Develop short and long-term strategies that support the Comprehensive Plan and the performance indicators/metrics to evaluate progress.
- Provide policy clarification and direction on critical issues including illegal tree cutting, inspection and enforcement for development, and handling competing interests such as infrastructure conflicts.

Detailed meeting notes were provided to the City's Environmental Services Department. Items noted above are consistent with the Urban Forest Policy Element's management goals, goals in One Tacoma, results of the tree canopy and inventory analyses, and outcomes from the public engagement exercises described in the Community Engagement section of this report.