



**City of Spokane
Citizen Advisory Committee to the
Urban Forestry Tree Committee**

3 p.m. Tuesday, July 1, 2025
Hybrid in-person and WebEx virtual meeting
Katie Kosanke - Urban Forester

Committee Members:

- X Kris Neely – Chair
- X Tim Kohlhauff – (Arrived 3:12 p.m.)
- X Beth LaBar
- X Guy Gifford
- Cindy Deffe – (Absent - Excused)
- X Joe Zubaly
- X Matt Stewart
- Justyce Brant – (Absent - Excused)
- Ben Kappen – (Absent – Excused)
- X Paul Lower – (Arrived 3:03 p.m.)
- X Logan Callen
- X Kathryn Alexander

Parks Staff:

Katie Kosanke

MINUTES

The meeting was called to order at 3:01 p.m. by committee chair Kris Neely.

Approval of Minutes: The minutes from **June 2025** were approved. Motion to approve the June 2025 minutes by Kathryn Alexander, seconded by Beth LaBar, approved unanimously.

Discussion Items:

1. Ceremonies, Appointments, Announcements - None

Public Comments: None

Standing Report Items:

1. Community Assembly – No report. Kris Neely advised Katie Kosanke will be attending the July CA meeting.
2. Staff Report - Katie Kosanke provided a staff report update.

- a. Urban Forestry continues to work on dead tree removals throughout the park system. The crew is doing formative pruning and clearance pruning
- b. Accessibility updates are being done at Finch Arboretum. Currently curb cuts are being put in that will allow access from the parking lot into the grounds of the arboretum.
- c. UF will be presenting to a group of interns at the Conservation District to introduce them to Urban Forestry and benefits of trees. The interns will observe UF crews working and Amber Ramirez will do a climbing demonstration.

Old Business:

1. IRA/USDA/USFS Grant Update – Katie Kosanke

Katie Kosanke presented an IRA/USDA/USFS Grant update.

- a. Urban Forestry recently received clarity from the grant administer advising the grant is not on pause and UF does not need to do anything differently.
- b. Dead tree removals were a priority for the first year of the grant. The three tree removal contractors have resumed work and are in the process of removing dead trees in three neighborhoods (Nevada Heights, Logan and Chief Gary) and then will start work in three more neighborhoods (Bemiss, Cliff Cannon and West Central). Tree plotter canopy tools were used to assist with determining the order of the neighborhood scheduling. Several very high-risk trees were packaged together into a small project and those high-risk removals have been completed.
- c. Pruning was proposed to start in year two of the grant. While the grant was on pause Amber Ramirez was able to plan out many pruning projects and pruning will start with park trees. Contracts for pruning are in place with contractors and pruning work will start soon.
- d. Spokane Public Schools were included in the grant. There are many good areas to plant trees and many tree maintenance needs. UF wants to invest in the school yards to make sure the trees are healthy, safe, and growing. UF is working with the school's maintenance staff to identify needs and is working on a proposal which they will present to the school district for approval. Some of the needs include removal of dead/high risk trees, pruning dead tree limbs, other high priority items, and possible clearance pruning. Work will be coordinated between the school's maintenance staff and the tree contractors.
- e. Spring plantings were very successful. Many trees were planted at residential locations and UF worked with the Monroe and East Sprague business districts to have tree replacements completed.
- f. The Lands Council is completing health checkups on trees planted this spring and last fall to ensure trees are getting water. They are providing educational outreach and reminders to locations where trees are not doing well. Watering buckets will be offered to assist with watering. These will be 5-gallon buckets with holes drilled in the sides that can be filled up once a week and the water slowly drips from the holes. UF is reaching out to restaurants, businesses and others to inquire if they have buckets they could donate, and Amber Ramirez made a template to provide citizens who would like to make their own buckets that shows

where to drill the holes in the watering bucket. Urban Forestry is also hiring a seasonal employee for temporary emergency watering services.

New Business:

1. Downtown Tree Replacement Pilot Program – Katie Kosanke

Katie shared information on the Downtown Tree Replacement Pilot Program.

- a. Angel Spell presented a proposal for a downtown tree replacement pilot program to Urban Forestry and the management team, and a resolution for the pilot program will move forward to Park Board and then to City Council for approval.
- b. There have been many challenges downtown replacing trees, obtaining permits, etc. and downtown has a unique and challenging environment to grow trees in. Some issues include vandalism, irrigation issues, and issues with infrastructure such as tree grates and sidewalks. Street trees are a requirement for businesses and commercial properties landscaping and due to the many challenges of replacing trees downtown Urban Forestry wants to make the process easier in this area to promote more replacements. UF wants a healthy, diverse tree canopy everywhere through quality planting, protection and stewardship of public street trees. Downtown currently only has 7% tree canopy and UF wants to help increase the tree canopy. Trees help reduce pollution, intercept storm water, reduce temperature and provide shade.
- c. Last year many locations downtown were reported to have dead or missing trees. Fifty-four notices were sent to downtown property owners last year and forty of the notices were resolved. A tree replacement program was offered last year through Urban Forestry and Downtown Spokane Partnership where downtown property owners could receive a free replacement tree(s) if they hired someone to plant the tree, would commit to making sure the tree(s) were getting water, and would monitor the tree(s) to be sure they survive.
- d. The current process requires a certified arborist to obtain a free tree permit, which can be done online and ensures the right tree is planted that will survive downtown, is appropriate for the planting area and that the tree is planted properly. For other groups it is complex because they cannot get the tree permit, as it must be obtained by the certified arborist. Urban Forestry met with City Council members, business owners, and landscapers that were interested in UF making it easier for other professionals or the property manager to replace a tree in the downtown area. The pilot program will be for 1 year and will waive the arborist and tree permit requirements for replacement trees at downtown locations. As part of the pilot program a UF arborist will oversee plantings downtown, guide with selecting species of trees and provide information to connect the person doing the planting with the appropriate person for irrigation issues and Development Services for obstruction permits which might be required.
- e. A new brochure will soon be available which includes pilot program information.
- f. UF would like a collaborative effort with abutting property owners downtown to engage them and make sure trees are being taken care of. The DSP clean team will assist with watering and build a monitoring program. DSP has contact information for many of the downtown business and tenants and will provide educational outreach and engage property owners to

fix issues, so they don't need to do a costly removal/replacement of trees. As a part of the educational outreach a temporary watering bag may be offered to assist with watering.

- g. The DSP has an employee who used to be an arborist and through the grant UF may invest to get the employee recertified so they can be the tree expert downtown and assist with watering, educational outreach, and minor pruning tasks such as small broken branches and for pedestrian clearance. UF/DSP will continue to offer free trees downtown. A cost sharing pruning day is being considered and DSP would help coordinate. If the grant allows UF would like to re-inventory all the street trees and assist with enlarging tree grates where trees are outgrowing grates and trees are being girdled.

Discussion took place regarding using biochar to assist with helping trees maintain moisture and to reduce water use. UF is using biochar on newly planted trees and will be offering watering buckets and adding biochar to trees that are struggling.

2. Finch Willow Update and Tree Trot Fundraiser – Katie Kosanke

- a. Urban Forestry will have a concept drawing for the Willow nature-based playground soon. Katie will share more information at the next meeting.
- b. Capital funding has not been identified yet for the project. A Tree Trot fundraiser will take place Saturday October 4th on the Finch Arboretum grounds to raise funds for the Willow nature-based playground. There will be two starting times, the first will be a more competitive run and the second time will be a more family friendly walk/run. UF is seeking sponsorships for t-shirts and other event costs with funds raised from registrations going to the fund for the Willow nature-based playground project. The recreation team will provide advertising in the recreation guide and online and will be handling the registrations. The Tree Trot will be an annual fundraiser. The first few years will likely raise funds for the Willow nature-based playground and then specified projects in subsequent years to raise funds for numerous projects at Finch Arboretum. More information on the Tree Trot will be provided soon.

Other Program and Partnership Ideas: None

Adjournment: The meeting was adjourned at 3:52 p.m.

The next regularly scheduled meeting is 3 p.m. August 5, 2025.

Summer 2025

Urban Forestry IRA Grant Update

Removals

- Three tree removal contractors are back to work to complete the Nevada Heights, Logan and Chief Garry neighborhoods
- Neighborhoods that will be receiving removals next are Bemiss, Cliff-Cannon and West Central
- 4 large dead/hazardous trees in high traffic areas that Urban Forestry has received many calls of concern about were put into a priority work package and have been completed



- **Pruning**

- 16 parks have been vetted to create pruning packages after removals are complete
- A conversation with SPS about grant work on school properties has been initiated for work at 25 schools within the work boundary
- 8 of the schools were identified by SPS maintenance personnel as having dead/hazardous tree removal needs
- Working on an MOU to get full support of the work that will include dead tree removals, pruning and tree planting
- Work plans for 3 schools have been field vetted

Tree Planting

- The Lands Council began doing health check-ups on the trees planted in Fall of 2024, leaving a report card and extra care info when needed and leaving a Tree Equity Spokane sticker when tree(s) were in good condition.
- We're in the process of on boarding a part time seasonal using Watering/Establishment grant funds to do emergency watering and leave additional info when trees are struggling.

SPOKANE URBAN FORESTRY



A Program of Parks & Recreation Natural Resources Downtown Tree Planting & Proposed Pilot Program

June 23, 2025



What does Spokane Urban Forestry do?

Create a diverse, healthy, and accessible urban tree canopy for the benefit of Spokane's citizens through quality planting, protection, and stewardship of public and street trees.



Benefits of healthy Tree Canopy Downtown

Street Trees are Part of Required Landscaping outlined in the Development Code for all Commercial Properties. Care and Maintenance of Street trees, grates and sidewalks is the responsibility of the abutting property owner by SMC.

Currently only 7% Canopy Cover Downtown / in the Riverside Neighborhood

To name a few....

- ▶ Reduce Pollution
- ▶ Intercept Stormwater runoff (+ river protection)
- ▶ Provides Shade - increases pavement life
- ▶ Reduce Temperatures / Heat Island Effect
- ▶ Aesthetics - Trees are Great for Business!
 - ▶ Research shows people travel from further away, and spend more money in landscaped shopping districts
 - ▶ Some of the most popular patios have beautiful trees



Current Tree Replacement Process Downtown

1. **Free Tree Permit / Urban Forestry**, by a City Licensed Tree Service
 - ▶ Ensures right tree, right place and proper planting
 - ▶ Allowance for involvement of abutting property owner, landscaper, property manager, etc.
 - ▶ Easy and free online process, for licensed tree services
 - ▶ Commercial Tree License simply requires minimum liability insurance, using ISA certified arborists, and having no violations of the SMC within the past year.
2. **Obstruction Permit / Development Services** - requirements vary depending upon type of obstruction to sidewalk and traffic lanes.
 - ▶ Tree Permit and Obstruction Permit combo not recommended as at times the Obstruction Permit is not required (which always has the \$50 fee)
 - ▶ Complex Sites may require traffic control / flagging
 - ▶ If applicable, work with Development Services to ensure compliance with Tree Grates and Sidewalks
3. **Irrigation** - Arborist or Landscape Professional to ensure irrigation is functioning properly
 - ▶ Either private irrigation or on a public system, call City Water Dept for assistance (311). No Permit requirement for regular irrigation repairs and maintenance.
4. **Follow up Care** - monitor tree for success

NEW - Information brochure will outline these steps for Downtown property owners

NEW - Investment in DSP employee to gain ISA Arborist Certification for tree stewardship downtown (watering, education, outreach, and minor pruning)



Current Challenges & Past Programs

Current Challenges

- ▶ Irrigation issues - often not caught early enough and lead to rapid tree decline = costly removals and replacement plantings
- ▶ Vandalism
- ▶ With tree replacement plantings, grates and sidewalks frequently need repair and these infrastructure items can be costly

UF is funded by the Park Fund, so funding for additional support has been limited for street trees in general.

Educational notices sent. No fines or violations issued. Code Enforcement follow up on infrastructure safety.

Past Programs

- ▶ Parking Funds - were available in the past and assisted in some replacements. Administered by DSP. Funds no longer available. Varied results of tree success due to lack of maintenance by property owner.
- ▶ Downtown Free Tree Program 2024
 - ▶ Spring and Fall 2024 - 40 free trees (2.5" caliper / value \$300 each) were provided through a Partnership with DSP to prompt replacements. All trees were claimed and planted by hired arborists.
 - ▶ Promotion of the program by DSP and info inserted into UF Courtesy Notices for reported locations.
 - ▶ Property owners committed to care and monitoring to ensure success when they signed up to receive the funding.



Outline of Proposed Downtown USFS Grant Project Contributions with DSP

Grant Program with DSP *through 2029*

- Monitoring trees throughout the summer by DSP Clean Team. This will result in lower mortality rates each season simply due to watering issues, which then require costly removal and replacement.
- Provide supplemental watering as needed by DSP to trees in need
- Provide tree care info when manager/owner may be onsite – to inform them of a possible issue. For absentee/vacant properties, DSP to mail or email watering reminder.
- Offer free temporary watering bags
- Investment in DSP employee to gain ISA Arborist Certification for tree stewardship downtown (watering, education, outreach, and minor pruning)
- General Educational Outreach – Trees are Great for Business + tree care tips, FAQs, and troubleshooting
- Continue program offering free trees to abutting property owners
- City or contracted arborist oversight and Tree Permit coordination provided for downtown tree plantings by others (for landscapers, property owners, managers, etc.)
- Potential cost-share program for maintenance or a “pruning day”. DSP coordinates pruning at a discounted rate for multiple properties at once (this will significantly save on costs for traffic obstruction, traffic control, mobilization) for maintenance operations.
- Full re-inventory of Street trees, if the grant funding allows.
- Enlargement of grates, if grant funding allows



Additional Support Proposed through Pilot Program & USFS Grant

City arborist support for tree planting

similar to the current homeowner planting guidelines

- Assist with species selection (Free trees available with limited species choice)
- Ensure proper planting to meet City specification V-101
- Provide Guidance to the property owner, manager, or landscape professional to quickly connect with Development Services Center and the Water Department
- Tracking of stats and updating inventory information since a Street Tree Permit requirement will be waived





Thank you!

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