



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

3 p.m. Tuesday, March 3, 2026  
Hybrid in-person and WebEx virtual meeting  
Katie Sorensen - Urban Forester

**Committee Members:**

- X Tim Kohlhauff
- Guy Gifford – (Absent – Excused)
- X Cindy Deffe
- Matt Stewart – (Absent – Excused)
- X Justyce Brant
- Ben Kappen – (Absent – Excused)
- X Logan Callen
- X Kathryn Alexander

**Parks Staff:**

Katie Sorensen

**Guests:**

Kris Neely  
Kelsi Caston

**MINUTES**

The meeting was called to order at 3:03 p.m. by committee member Tim Kohlhauff who opened the meeting with introductions.

**Public Comments:**

Kathryn Alexander shared that Soil Smart Soil Wise is having a fundraising film seminar at the Magic Lantern on April 21<sup>st</sup> at 5:30 p.m. Cost to attend is \$25 and is limited to 100 people. They are also looking for organizations to sponsor the event. The film being shown is Regenerating Life by John Feldman that speaks for the need for water and soil and how that impacts the approach to climate change. There will be a question period about the film and then they will stream Didi Pershouse, who is a worldwide soil expert and is in the film. She will answer questions and share information.

Tim Kohlhauff shared as a private citizen, that the House and Senate recently released their budget for the upcoming biennium and the funding from the House budget eliminates the Urban and Community Forestry program at the Washington State Department of Natural Resources. There may be some funding available for a coordinator, but they will lose about ten employees and won't be able to manage some grants they already have in place because those grants are dependent on

state matching funds with federal funds and some current grants running will have to stop. The Washington Community Forestry Council Advisory Board to this program wrote a letter to Tim Ormsby, the head of the appropriation committee for the house budget asking for him to restore the funding for this program. If people are interested, they can contact Tim Ormsby, by March 12<sup>th</sup> to request the funding for this program be restored.

**Approval of Minutes:** The minutes from **December 2025** were approved. Motion to approve the December 2025 minutes by Kathryn Alexander, seconded by Justyce Brant, approved unanimously. The minutes from **February 2026 (special meeting)** were approved. Motion to approve the February 2026 (special meeting) minutes by Kathryn Alexander, seconded by Cindy Deffe, approved unanimously.

### **Discussion Items:**

#### 1. Ceremonies, Appointments, Announcements

- **Kelsi Caston Letter of Interest, Eduardo Castillo Letter of Interest, and Kris Neely Letter of Interest** – Kathryn Alexander made a motion to appoint Kelsi Caston, Eduardo Castillo and Kris Neely to the UFCAC. Justyce Brant seconded the motion. A vote was taken to appoint Kelsi, Eduardo, and Kris to the UFCAC and passed unanimously 5-0.
- Kathryn Alexander was reappointed to the UFCAC by the Community Assembly for a four-year term.
- Kris Neely was elected Chair of the committee and Tim Kohlhauff was elected Vice Chair of the committee. Cindy Deffe made a motion to appoint Kris to the Chair and Tim to the Vice Chair and Justyce Brant seconded the motion. A vote was taken and passed unanimously 5-0.

### **Standing Report Items:**

1. Community Assembly – No Report.
2. Staff Report – Katie Sorensen
  - a. Urban Forestry hired a new seasonal employee that is from Spokane Community College, and they are working 1-2 days a week with the Urban Forestry crew.
  - b. Urban Forestry is working to complete removal of beetle killed trees throughout the park system. Park Operations and other park staff have been assisting and most removals are completed in all areas with removals wrapping up at Manito Park. UF was aiming to finish the beetle killed tree removals by April, but with 60-degree days approaching the removals will be completed sooner.
  - c. There was a Beetle Workshop last month that was well attended. Another Beetle Workshop will be on March 28<sup>th</sup> at Finch Arboretum. Information is on the website and social media. The workshop is for professionals, homeowners, and anyone interested in learning more about the topic.

- d. Grant work continues. The majority of tree removals through the grant have been completed. Pruning of park trees is in process, vetting of neighborhoods for tree pruning has started, and UF and contractors will be transitioning to planting soon. UF is considering adding more contractors to help complete work through the grant.

**Old Business:** None

**New Business:**

**1. Heritage Tree Nomination** – Katie Sorensen

The committee reviewed a Heritage Tree nomination for an Oak tree at the Cathedral of St. John the Evangelist. Committee members would like to view the tree in person so further review and discussion of the Heritage Tree nomination will take place at the next committee meeting.

**2. DSP Educational Partnership for Downtown** – Katie Kosanke

Katie provided an overview of the grant subaward contract for DSP to provide seasonal watering and educational services. As part of the six-million-dollar grant project UF proposed some funding for downtown and downtown is within the CJEST boundaries where grant funds can be used. There are many challenges downtown so for the downtown grant project to be successful it needs to be a collaborative project.

There are many benefits of a healthy tree canopy downtown including providing shade and reducing temperatures. Currently there is only 7% canopy cover downtown and in the Riverside neighborhood. Some challenges downtown include irrigation issues and vandalism. If issues aren't caught early, it can lead to tree decline and costly removals and replacements that abutting property owners are responsible for.

There have been several programs downtown previously including one that utilized parking funds, but those funds are no longer available. A downtown free tree program started in 2024 with DSP assisting with signups and flyers regarding the free trees going out with notices. The free downtown tree program offers 40 free trees in the Spring and 40 in the Fall. There will be another 40 trees offered through this program this spring.

The grant program with DSP will run until February 2029. The DSP Clean Team will monitor trees throughout the hot summer months and provide supplemental watering if needed, contact onsite managers/owners to advise of issues, and offer free temporary watering bags. There will also be an educational component including tree care tips. Free trees will continue to be offered along with the pilot program which allows a property manager or landscaper to plant the trees downtown with city arborist oversight. There will be a cost share program which will be administered by DSP. Urban Forestry will also provide investment to assist a DSP employee to obtain their ISA Arborist Certification.

Additional support proposed through the pilot program and USFS Grant would provide City arborist support for replacement trees, which is similar to the current homeowner planting guidelines. It would include assisting with species selection, ensuring proper planting, providing guidance, and tracking and updating inventory information.

The overall grant investment for this program is 2.1%.

**3. Arbor Day Celebration call for volunteers – Katie Sorensen**

The Arbor Day Celebration will be on Saturday April 25<sup>th</sup> from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. rain or shine. The committee was invited to attend and/or volunteer if they are able. The mayor will be attending and there will be a Tree City USA Ceremony at 1 p.m. and a ribbon cutting for the new and improved Touch and See Trail. All the partners for the Touch and See Trail are invited to attend and will be listed on a plaque near the trail. There will be typical fun including a tree planting, free refreshments, Corbin Art Center will be providing crafts, music, a compost fair and free compost and new this year the Washington Department of Fish & Wildlife will be hosting a class during the Arbor Day Festival.

**Other Program and Partnership Ideas:** None

**Adjournment:** The meeting was adjourned at 4:04 p.m.

The next regularly scheduled meeting is 3 p.m. March 31, 2026.

December 4th, 2025

Garrett Jones  
Director of Parks & Recreation  
City of Spokane  
808 West Spokane Falls Blvd.  
Spokane, WA 99201

Dear Mr. Jones,

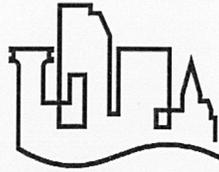
This letter is to express my interest in joining the UFCAC as a representative of the horticulture and arboriculture industry. I have a B.S. in Horticulture from Oregon State University and am a Certified Arborist with 10+ years in the local horticulture community. My experience includes tree selection and care, sustainable horticulture, and community education. Being born and raised in Spokane, I have a strong appreciation for the beauty and importance of our public green spaces. My commitment to horticulture and arboriculture, along with my desire to help guide Spokane's urban forest stewardship, motivates me to seek a position on the UFCAC.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Kelsi Caston  
Procurement and Nursery Manager  
ISA Certified Arborist  
Clearwater Summit Group inc.



# **DOWNTOWN SPOKANE**

## **PARTNERSHIP**

February 11, 2026

Garrett Jones  
Director of Parks and Recreation  
City of Spokane  
808 West Spokane Falls Blvd.  
Spokane, WA 99201

Dear Mr. Jones,

This letter is to let you know of my interest in joining the UFCAC as a representative of Downtown Spokane. I have been employed for 2 years with the Downtown Spokane Partnership as Clean Team Lead and now Placemaking Manager. During this time, I have had the pleasure of working with property owners and UF to help improve our downtown canopy through the Tree Pilot Program. Prior to employment with DSP I worked in the arboriculture industry for ten years, some of which with current members. I hope that if allowed to join this committee we could further advance our efforts to cultivate a community focused on improving canopy health everywhere.

Thank You for your consideration.

Best wishes,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'E. Castillo', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Eduardo Castillo  
Placemaking Manager  
Downtown Spokane Partnership

**Kris Neely**

**12/8/2025**

4206 S. Tampa Street  
Spokane, Washington 99223  
(509) 999-6970

**Mr. Garrett Jones**

Director, Parks and Recreation

**Mr. Kevin Brownlee**

Chair, Urban Forestry Tree Committee

**Subject: Interest in Appointment to the Urban Forestry Tree Committee**

Dear Mr. Jones and Mr. Brownlee,

I am writing to express my interest in serving on the City of Spokane's Urban Forestry Tree Committee. Spokane's urban canopy is one of the city's most important public assets, and I would welcome the opportunity to continue to support the committee's ongoing work to protect and strengthen it. My background in governance, planning, conservation, business process engineering, and fiscal management aligns well with the committee's responsibilities and the collaborative decision-making required of its members.

My relevant experience includes:

**Urban Forestry Citizen Advisory Committee (UFCAC):**

Four years of service, including two years as Chair, representing the Community Assembly and working directly with city staff and neighborhood stakeholders. During this time, I advocated for closer coordination between the City's Urban Forestry program and the Spokane County Conservation District (SCD); encouraged integrating student volunteers from the SCD into Urban Forestry field projects (which was successfully implemented in 2025); and supported efforts to improve cost modeling around tree lifespans and long-term maintenance in an urban setting.

**City of Spokane Plan Commission:**

Two years on the commission with a particular focus on how urban forestry intersects with housing, transportation, and commercial development. In this role, I supported establishing a clear "per-unit tree planting standard" for new Auxiliary Dwelling Unit (ADU) construction to ensure that infill development aligns with long-term canopy goals.

**Spokane Conservation District Board:**

To date, two years on the board as an Associate Supervisor, contributing to forestry and conservation initiatives and working across diverse community and agricultural interests.

While serving, I've developed a model for deploying Miyawaki-style mini-forests in urban environments and am currently soliciting peer review to refine its applicability within Spokane with the goal of taking the idea public in 2026-2027.

**Continuing Education:**

Regular participation in Washington Association of Conservation Districts (WACD) and State Conservation Commission (SCC) meetings to remain current on statewide forestry and conservation practices.

**Budget and Finance Roles:**

Frequent appointments to volunteer budget committees, providing practical experience in municipal budgeting, grant funding oversight, and responsible financial governance.

Across these roles, I have valued the committee-driven process—listening to community perspectives, weighing technical guidance, and building consensus to support sound, sustainable outcomes. I would bring the same steady, collaborative approach to the Urban Forestry Tree Committee.

If helpful, I would be glad to Zoom, meet, or provide additional information. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,



**Kris Neely**

krisneely@pm.me

(509) 999-6970



## Heritage Tree Nomination Form

### Nominator Information

Name: Linda Finney  
 Address: 13613 S Valley Chapel Rd  
Valleyford, WA 99036  
 Phone: (Day) 509 838 4632  
 (Eve) 509 838 4632  
 Email Address lindatfinney@gmail.com

### (Property owner must agree to nomination)

Name: Cathedral of St John the Evangelist  
 Address: 127 E 12th Ave  
Spokane, WA 99202  
 Phone: (Day) 509 838 4277  
 (Eve) \_\_\_\_\_

### Property/Tree Owner Information

Designated Neighborhood: South Hill, Spokane  
 Location (Street Address): 127 E 12th Ave  
 Species of Tree (Common or Botanical Name): English Oak, Quercus Robur  
 Single/Collection of trees (If Collection, How Many Trees): one tree

Size: Height (approx.) 40-45 (feet)

Crown (approx.) measure distance of total spread from one side to other: 35 (feet)

Circumference (distance around trunk at 4.5 feet from ground): 25 (inches)

Age of Tree (If Known/Estimate): 50-60 yrs

Condition (check all that apply and explain any issues on back of page:

- Healthy  Diseased  Pruning/Structural problems  
*recently pruned*

List any historical fact About the Tree (Documented/Estimated)

*see attached*

What is most noteworthy about the tree/trees that meets the criteria (check all that apply).

- Size  Public  Visibility  Rare Horticultural Value  
 Aesthetic Qualities  Historical

Explain why you think the tree/trees should be nominated for heritage distinction - use another piece of paper, if necessary. Please include a photograph (black & white or color) and a simple tree location map.

*see attached*

We believe this beautiful English Oak was planted about 1964-67 at the instigation of Mary Cooper Jewett Gaiser. She was known for "loving wonderful trees" and planted trees at the Cathedral and at her home. This was during the time that the Jewett family and others built the Jewett House. Mary was heavily involved in the Cathedral's Landscape Association for years along with Ruth Farnham.

We believe that the English Oak was planted in honor of Ruth, in recognition of her work in the Episcopal Diocese of Spokane and on the Landscape Association. Several of the Association minutes contain Ruth's reminders that the tree must be cared for and preserved. At one point she foiled an attempt "by someone whose name we won't mention" to cut the tree down.

Ben Stanton of Spokane TreePro has been caring for the trees on the Cathedral campus for the last two years. It was he who pointed out to us how important the tree is and encouraged us to get it listed as a Heritage Tree.



English Oak  
Cathedral of St John  
127 E 12th  
Spokane WA

Tree is located on NW  
corner of Cathedral campus  
ground





# Property Owner Agreement Form

## HISTORIC AND HERITAGE TREE PROGRAM

In exchange for the City's designation of the subject tree as a Heritage Tree, the Property Owner agrees to protect, maintain and care for the Heritage Tree located on his or her property. Property Owner agrees to abide by conditions set forth in the City of Spokane Code, Section 12.02.916, particularly:

- A. "A Heritage Tree or collection of trees is retained by the property owner and does not become the property or responsibility of the City – unless the tree(s) are city owned."
- B. "The property owner is responsible for all maintenance and liability issue pertaining to the tree or trees."
- C. Prior to removal of a Heritage Tree, a property owner must notify the Urban Forest Tree Committee/Urban Forest Program. The City **strongly encourages** all Heritage Tree property owners to retain these significant tree(s)
- D. If a property owner removes a heritage Tree or collection of trees, the plaque or identification marker shall be returned to the Urban Forest Program.

Property Owner understands that sponsorships or assistance for care of the tree may be available from the City's Urban Forestry Program. In addition, if the Property Owner may want any advice, it can be offered at no cost by the City Urban Forestry Program (509.363.5495).

Property Owner as owner of the English oak (species) tree now being considered for this distinction, hereby consent to its being designated a Heritage Tree by the Urban Forestry Committee of Spokane, Washington.

Tree Location (Address, Tax Lot): 127 E 12<sup>th</sup> Ave Spokane, WA 99202

Signed: Heather VanSledright, Dean, St. John's Cathedral Property Owner  
Date: 2/13/2020

Submitted by Urban Forestry Tree Committee: \_\_\_\_\_ (Date)  
 Approved by Urban Forestry Program: \_\_\_\_\_ (Date)  
 Approved by Director, Parks and Recreation: \_\_\_\_\_ (Date)  
 Filed with Urban Forestry Program and Website: \_\_\_\_\_ (Date)

# SPOKANE URBAN FORESTRY



## Downtown Spokane Partnership IRA USDA USFS Grant Partnership



# 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 restaurant patios have beautiful trees

# Challenges & Previous Programs Downtown

- ▶ Irrigation issues - often are not caught early enough and lead to rapid tree decline = costly removals/replacements
- ▶ Vandalism
- ▶ Often along with tree replacements, grates and sidewalks may need repair and those infrastructure items can be costly

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

Educational notices sent - No fines or violations issued - Infrastructure safety issues Code Enforcement for follow up

## Previous Programs

- ▶ Parking Funds
  - ▶ Were available in the past which assisted in some replacements. Funds are no longer available. Varied results of tree success due to lack of abutting property owner involvement / upkeep.
- ▶ Downtown Free Tree Program 2024 - current
  - ▶ Up to 40 trees each spring and Fall, free trees (2.5" cal / value \$300 each) were provided through a Partnership with DSP to prompt replacements. All trees were claimed and planted by hired arborists.
  - ▶ Advertisement of the program by DSP and program info inserted into Courtesy Notices for reported locations
  - ▶ Property owners committed to care and monitoring to ensure success when they signed up

# Outline of Proposed Downtown USFS Grant Project Contributions with DSP

## Grant Program with DSP to 2029

- Monitoring trees throughout the summer months by DSP Clean Team. This will result in fewer trees that die each season simply due to watering issues, which then require costly removal/replacement.
  - Provide supplemental watering as needed by DSP to trees that are water stressed
  - Location provided with tree care info if manager/owner may be onsite – to inform them of a possible issue. For absentee/vacant properties, DSP to mail or email watering reminder with information on troubleshooting common issues.
  - Offer free temp watering bags
- General Educational Outreach – Trees are Great for Business + tree care tips, encourage ownership
- Continued offer of free trees to abutting property owners
- Pilot Program - City arborist oversight and Tree Permit coordination provided for downtown tree plantings by others (for landscapers, property owners, managers, etc.
- Cost-share program. DSP coordinates pruning at a discounted rate for multiple properties at once (this will drastically save costs on traffic obstruction/traffic control/mobilization) for maintenance operations.
- Investment to DSP Employee for ISA Arborist Certification



**DOWNTOWN SPOKANE**  
PARTNERSHIP

# Additional Support Proposed Through Pilot Program & USFS Grant

City provided Arborist support for replacement trees  
*similar to the current homeowner planting guidelines*

- Assist with species selection (Free trees available with limited species choices)
- Ensure proper planting
- Provide Guidance to the property owner, manager, or landscape professional to connect with Development Services and the Water Dept
- Tracking of stats and updating inventory information since a Tree Permit will be waived



<b>a. Personnel and Fringe Benefits</b>	
Executive Staff	\$6,400
Operational and Technical Staff	\$56,000
Communications and Promotions	2,800
Subtotal of personnel and benefits cost	\$65,200

<b>d. Supplies</b>	
printing of educational materials, flyers, posters, tree water bags	\$10,000

<b>f. Other</b>	
Cost Share Program for tree work (over four years)	\$53,200
ISA Arborist study materials, testing and recertification credits (over 4 years)	\$2,000
<b>g. Total Direct Charges</b>	\$130,400

# Budget Breakdown

▶ \$130,400  
to February 2029

(2.1% of Overall Grant Investment)



## Next Steps

- ▶ March 10<sup>th</sup> Finance Committee, Contract approval Consideration
- ▶ March 12, 2026 Park Board Meeting
- ▶ Program launch!

Katie Sorensen  
Urban Forester  
[ksorensen@spokanecity.org](mailto:ksorensen@spokanecity.org)  
509-363-5496

# Thank you!

[Spokaneurbanforestry.org](http://Spokaneurbanforestry.org)

