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## MEMORANDUM

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**TO:** BELLINGHAM CITY COUNCIL  
**FROM:** ERIC JOHNSTON, DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC WORKS  
**CC:** MAYOR SETH FLEETWOOD  
**SUBJECT:** URBAN FORESTRY MANAGEMENT PLAN - PHASE 3, CANOPY COVER TARGET  
**DATE:** 11/20/2023

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### BACKGROUND

The City of Bellingham is creating the City's first [Urban Forestry Management Plan](#) (UFMP). The purpose of the UFMP is to serve as a city-wide strategic plan that helps maintain a healthy and desirable urban forest through well-coordinated, consistent, efficient, and sustainable long-term urban forest management.

Bellingham's urban forest consists of forest and trees in the City on both public and private property, including street trees, park trees, forested parklands, trees on institutional campuses and trees in many private ownership settings, ranging from parking lots to backyards. The City of Bellingham recognizes the value of trees and is a proud Tree City USA community; recognized nationally for our community-based effort to sustain our urban forest. While the Bellingham community has long valued urban forests, the City has not had an overarching plan to help guide forest management and stewardship efforts. The intent is to create such a strategic plan in keeping with the vision established in the City's [Comprehensive Plan](#) (2016, p.12). Development of a UFMP plan is led by the Public Works Department and involves multiple departments including Planning, Parks, and Fire.

In January 2021, staff presented a three-phase process to create an UFMP. In August 2021, staff presented the results of Phase 1, Assessment. In November 2022, staff presented the results of Phase 2, Community Values. In September 2023, staff presented an update on Phase 3, Plan Development. Staff presented draft vision, goals and strategies and outlined the benefits and challenges associated with balancing interests.

### CURRENT STATUS

In preparation for completing Phase 3, staff evaluated three possible canopy cover target scenarios: Status Quo (35%), No Net Loss (40%), and Growth (45%). The canopy cover target will guide and inform which actions are included in the UFMP. Staff will present the targets with a recommend that a No Net Loss (40%) canopy cover target be adopted. Staff will also summarize near-term efforts to support urban forest stewardship in advance of the UFMP.

### NEXT STEPS:

Staff will conclude Phase 3 by drafting the UFMP. The UFMP will include vision, goals, strategies, and actions. Phase 3 will include an opportunity for community feedback on the draft UFMP. Community feedback will be incorporated in the final UFMP for City Council approval.

### RECOMMENDATION COUNCIL ACTION:

Motion to adopt a 40% canopy cover target for use in the Urban Forestry Management Plan.