



South Park Blocks Tree Succession Strategy (revised)

July 7, 2020

Purpose

This tree succession strategy works to balance goals for improving the urban forest and maintaining historic character. It retains much of the grid-style tree planting of large stature trees (primarily American elms) that is a character-defining feature of the South Park Blocks. It also incorporates goals that increase the resiliency of the urban woodland to issues such as pests, disease, and climate change that are more pronounced in monocultures.

Approach

Tree locations and their spacing reflect the necessary soil and canopy space required for each tree type while maintaining the characteristic overlapping canopy condition at their maturity. The implementation of this vision at its apex will maintain an urban woodland with full canopy coverage for nearly all of the South Park Blocks, providing shade that is critical in an urban environment in the summer but also open to light in most places in the winter.

Maintain a grid of trees on each block that highlight and emphasize a central spine of large form trees that will reflect the character of the American Elms that are there now. Within the Cultural District the central spine consists of an alleé of large trees framing the central promenade. Within the University District large trees are primarily present in a central row of plantings that are sometimes interrupted to accommodate pathways and plaza spaces, but the visual presence of the rows remains visible throughout.

Along the east and west sides of the park blocks, a greater variety of tree species will be planted in a grid reminiscent of the historic planting pattern, but with recognition that some increased spacing is necessary to ensure better growing conditions than current spacing allows. These outer rows will include new large and medium stature tree species that increase the urban woodland's future resiliency, but which also reflect the form of the historic park's vegetative character.

Deciduous tree species will be dominant throughout the park blocks. Evergreen trees will be limited to the university blocks in small numbers and only in strategic locations. The distribution and location of tree species will be guided by maintaining the sense of symmetry and order that currently exists and is a character-defining feature.

Tree Species

Based on this approach, 258 trees are planned for the mature plant-out of the 12-block park. The City of Portland's Title 11 states that projects planting more than 24 trees cannot plant more than 24% of any single species, with city wide goals of having no more than 5% of any single species. To compliment the historic character of these blocks, the city-wide goals for species diversity will not be reflected here, and the Master Plan anticipates proposing an

exception to the Title 11 diversity requirement. However, the requirement to avoid any species exceeding 24% will be met over the entire park blocks and on some individual blocks, as well. The Title 11 exception may also assist the park's eligibility for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places.

American elms were nearly 100% of the trees planted during the historic period and represent 45% of the trees that remain today. Over time the percentage of American Elms in these blocks will be reduced to under 24% of the total tree population. Strategic locations are selected to continue to have large American elms (Dutch elm disease resistant cultivars) or comparable trees. This balances the park's role as an urban woodland and a National Register of Historic Places eligible historic district.

Deciduous tree species will include a Dutch elm disease-resistant cultivar (*Ulmus Americana* 'Jefferson' is currently recommended), and a variety of trees that evoke the character, form, and stature of American Elms. The consultant team is currently working with PP&R and Urban Forestry to identify and vet a list of deciduous trees that are appropriate for the South Park Blocks. This list of trees would include large stature trees that are comparable to American Elms for the central planters AND other large and medium stature trees that are not exact elm replacements for the edges of the park.

Evergreen species slated for inclusion in the University District should include both conifers and evergreen broadleaf species. The consultant team is currently working with PP&R and Urban Forestry to identify and vet a list of evergreen trees that are appropriate for the South Park Blocks.

Spacing Guidelines

Spacing guidelines were established based on stature to help ensure a closed canopy over time while also maximizing growing space for individual trees.

- Trees categorized as medium stature must be spaced no closer than 20 feet on center from other newly planted or existing medium-sized trees and 25 feet to large trees.
- Trees categorized as large stature must be spaced no closer than 30 feet on center from other newly planted or existing large trees and 25 feet to medium trees.

Title 11

Title 11.60.020.D.1 Species requirement

For sites with between 8-24 trees, no more than 40% can be of one species.

For sites with more than 24 trees, no more than 24% can be of one species.

This applies to trees being planted, not to existing trees.

Title 11.60.020.D.5

The City Forester may make an exception to the species requirement listed above when the alternate species is an appropriate and viable selection and is consistent with applicable objectives of an adopted and area-specific tree plan or guidelines (such as this Master Plan).