



Happy Valley Neighborhood Association (HVNA): Street Tree Inventory Methodology

From March to May 2023, HVNA board members Wendy Scherrer, John Hymas, and Sheilagh Brown assisted interns Connor Garrod and Angelina Greear in a street tree inventory of a section of the Happy Valley neighborhood. The purpose of this project was to record the number of street trees currently present in the neighborhood and compare it to a comprehensive history of trees planted in the neighborhood since 1999. By doing this, the Street, Trees, and Trail committee within the neighborhood association can assess where the need for trees is and how many trees to plant each year to reach the goal of 40% canopy cover by 2030, set by the Green Infrastructure Plan with the City of Bellingham. Our inventory took place in three stages:

- Stage 1: Mill Avenue to Larrabee Avenue from 14th-24th St.
- Stage 2: Donovan Avenue to Old Fairhaven Parkway from 14th-24th St.
- Stage 3: 'The Cross Streets'; 14th to 24th Street from Mill-OFP

The inventory took place once a week, rain or shine. For Stage 1, each of the four streets took the full time (about 2.5 hours) to complete. Stage 2 took less time, as there aren't many planting strips or places to plant trees on those streets. Stage 3 took two sessions to complete since it covers more ground, but also has fewer trees compared to the main neighborhood streets.

Overall, the first street tree inventory for HVNA was a success. Through this inventory, we were able to assess what trees are currently in the neighborhood. Also, we were able to identify almost 90 addresses that need street trees and they will be the focus for the HVNA board when planting season draws near.

Steps for conducting a street inventory:

1. Familiarize yourself with both types of inventory sheets. There are simplified versions to take into the field with you and a full version that goes more in-depth.
 - a. Simplified version: These were created in hopes to make taking data easier as we walk around. The property addresses for each sheet will help you stay on track.
 - b. Full version: These are found solely in Google Sheets or Excel, for there is a lot more information in these. The property address, name of owners, and mailing address was obtained from CityIQ (<https://maps.cob.org/geviewer/Html5Viewer/Index.html?viewer=cityiq>). This data sheet is meant to be combined with the street tree history in order to have a bigger view of the plantings over the years.
2. When walking around the neighborhood, make sure you have these things with you:
 - a. Sibley tree identification book
 - b. Clipboard and pencil
 - c. Data sheets for street inventorying
 - d. A phone with access to the internet, preferably with a plant identification app as well
 - e. Name tag
 - f. HVNA Street Tree fliers
3. Conducting the street tree inventory
 - a. Using the simplified data sheets, write how many trees of each species you find for each property listed. It is okay to just write the common name for each tree, when the data is entered later, you can look up the scientific name. The notes category is for things such as where it is located (ex: in a parking strip or front yard), the presence or absence of water bags, or if there are no trees and it is a good place to plant. Also note if the trees were planted by the homeowners or HVNA.
 - b. Be prepared to tell people what you're up to! When we first surveyed the neighborhood, we connected with a few people that became very excited to learn about what the neighborhood association is doing to make Happy Valley an even better place to live. Make sure to give them a flier!
 - c. Pro tip: take a picture of trees you are uncertain of, either to remember for future inventories or to get a second look at to confirm the species.
4. How to determine if a tree should be cataloged:
 - a. If a tree is in a planting strip, it's definitely a street tree.
 - b. If the parking strip is absent, look to see how close to the road the trees are and how big they are. If there isn't a gravel parking strip and the trees are fairly close to the road, count it as a street tree. If there is a waterway, don't count what is on the other side of it. If it is a hedge or very large tree, there is a good chance it

was not planted by HVNA. These trees will already be taken note of by the city's LIDAR test.

- c. There is no need to inventory shrubs.
5. Inputting data into the spreadsheet:
- a. This is the time to add the scientific name, just as a secondary data method.
 - b. When adding in properties that do NOT have street trees, add in '—' for each category to make it obvious there is nothing there. Make sure to note if a planting strip is present or not. If there is a planting strip with no trees, this property is especially important to take note of as a perfect place for future plantings.
 - i. If you can't remember if there was a planting strip or not, use CityIQ. By changing the base map to the most recent satellite image, you can view the street from above and confirm.
 - c. The categories "Date Planted" and "Replacement?" are to be used with the planting history provided by John Hymas. This helps us take note of which species have survived over the years and places where trees were planted previously but aren't present now. This will also help with future plantings. If there isn't a record of it, highlight the box with yellow. Later, you can ask John Hymas or other neighborhood planters if they remember.
 - d. Highlight property addresses in red that are good candidates for planting as an easy way to identify them in the spreadsheets.