

Community Advisory Group

Code Recommendations Summary Overview & Discussion Topics

Introduction

The Shoreline Tree Code Update Project Team developed the Tree Code Recommendation Summary Report to provide the City with a suite of recommendations to consider as part of the tree code update. This document provides a high-level overview of the key topics under consideration in the Code Recommendations Summary.

The Tree Code Recommendations Summary Report draws on industry best practices informed by arboriculture and silviculture¹, urban tree canopy science, critical areas, stormwater management, climate change impacts and adaptation, and sustainable landscape strategies. Additionally, recommendations reflect trends in local urban forest management and regulatory approaches from jurisdictions within the Puget Sound region.

Key topics include the significant tree threshold, quantifying tree retention, tree replacement, code enforcement, and landmark trees. Other topics include definitions, professional qualifications, and permitting requirements. Through the Shoreline Tree Code Update Project, the City will review and revise these provisions to align with urban forestry best practices and reinforce its commitment to achieving long-term tree canopy goals. The Project includes a robust community engagement plan as well as work sessions with City staff, Planning Commission, and City Council.

The Community Advisory Group will discuss the key topics and questions outlined in this overview. Additional information on each of these topics is found in the Code Recommendations Summary Report provided to you. For each of the topics outlined below, we have provided a summary of a preliminary recommendation made by the City Staff Project Team, as well as some of the key questions that the Community Advisory Group will tackle over the next few months.

¹ Best practices for arboriculture include but are not limited to the American National Standards Institute (ANSI) which are industry consensus standards developed by the Tree Care Industry Association written by the Accredited Standards Committee. ANSI standards cover everything from specific tree care specifications such as pruning and planting to worker safety.

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1. Applicability

In a tree code, "applicability" refers to the scope and conditions under which the tree , retention, and removal regulations are enforced. It identifies which trees the rules apply to, based on size, condition, and location. It also specifies which activities, such as clearing and grading and other construction activities, are subject to the tree code's provisions. Based on research described in the Tree Code Recommendations Summary and work sessions with the City Tree Code Update Project Team, the City has identified the following direction for applying the tree code.

- **Regulated Trees** are those 6 inches DBH or greater, identified to be in 'healthy' or 'viable' condition.
- Large, mature trees 24 inches DBH or greater will be defined as **Exceptional Trees** and could be subject to additional protections and replacement requirements.
- Tree regulations will apply to **all tree removals**, whether or not they are associated with development activity, with clear process for removing emergency, hazard, and nuisance trees.
- Tree retention and planting will be regulated using a **Tree Density Credit Method**.

Tree Density Credit Methodology

The City will no longer require a percentage of existing trees to be retained and will instead implement a **Tree Density Credit Method**. This method will establish a minimum tree density requirement for private properties (See Section 4.3.2 of the Code Recommendations Summary). This methodology regulates tree retention based on individual tree diameter (similar to existing code) but assigns value based on the size of a tree (for example, a tree that is 20 inches DBH is worth more tree credits than a

10' DBH tree). The method of regulating tree density credit is based on how timber stocking levels are measured, which quantify density by trunk diameter (DBH) of existing trees. The City would set its tree credit values similar to other regional cities who use this method.

The Tree Credit Method is used to calculate a site's existing tree density and identify tree retention and replacement requirements. Tree density can consist of existing trees, replacement trees, or a combination of both. The Tree Density Credit method is being recommended because it provides flexibility in how tree code requirements apply to different zones and development types.

- Tree density requirements can be scaled up or down by land use zone and/or by the scale of the proposed development (e.g., development intensity).
- Tree density assigns higher values to larger trees. It can also assign a high value to native or other important trees.
- Tree density can be restrictive (must keep certain existing trees) or more flexible (let the owner decide how to meet the requirement with any combination of existing or planted trees).

The Community Advisory Group will spend Meeting #3 discussing the Tree Density Credit requirements in more detail.

2. Regulated Tree Definitions

A recommendation from the Code Recommendations Summary is to simplify and be more specific about the terms used to regulate trees.

Regulated Trees

The City will transition from use of the term "Significant" to "Regulated" when referring to trees subject to the tree ordinance requirements. (See Code Recommendations Summary 4.2).

Exceptional Trees

The City is evaluating a new definition for **Exceptional Trees** and is considering setting the size threshold at 24 inches DBH. The City is also considering separately defining the DBH for common tree species of the Pacific Northwest whose maximum size at maturity is smaller or that are slow growing (See Table 1 and Code Recommendations Summary, Sections 4.2.5 and 4.3.5).

Exceptional trees could have more restrictive retention requirements or could require additional replacement trees.

Table 1. Example of recommended Exceptional Tree threshold diameters

Species	Threshold Diameter (DBH)
Cascara - Frangula purshiana	8 inches

Species	Threshold Diameter (DBH)
Oregon White or Garry Oak - <i>Quercus garryana</i>	12 inches
Pacific Dogwood – <i>Cornus nuttallii</i>	12 inches
Pacific Madrone – <i>Arbutus menziesii</i>	8 inches
Pacific Yew - <i>Taxus brevifolia</i>	8 inches
Shore Pine – <i>Pinus contorta 'contorta'</i>	12 inches
Vine maple – <i>Acer circinatum</i>	10 inches
Willow (All native species) – <i>Salix sp.</i>	8 inches

Hazard, Nuisance, and Emergency Tree Management

The City will establish new definitions and requirements for the management of hazard and nuisance trees. The recommendations are to provide more clarity on what a hazard tree is and to allow the removal of nuisance trees that currently do not count as hazard trees. Property owners may be required to demonstrate that the tree in question meets the criteria for a hazard or nuisance, and that all other mitigation options have been explored, before removal will be permitted. Emergency removals will be clearly defined and allowed. The City is considering a permitting/notification requirement for removal (See Code Recommendations Summary, Sections 4.2.3 and 4.2.4).

Emergency Tree

The City will continue to allow for emergency tree removals. The City will retain the ability to contest emergency tree removals and require documentation. The City will explore requiring a permit to for emergency tree removals to be submitted after removal.

Hazard Tree Example Definition:

According to the International Society of Arboriculture (ISA) TRAQ protocol, a hazard tree is one with a structural defect or condition that increases the likelihood of failure and could result in damage to people or property. A tree is only considered hazardous if both of the following are present:

- Defect – a structural weakness, decay, disease, or other condition that predisposes the tree or its parts to failure.
- Target – people, property, or activities that could be injured or damaged if the tree or part of it fails.

With these criteria in mind, not all unhealthy trees are considered a hazard. In some cases risk mitigation can be achieved by selective pruning of damaged tree branches (See Code Recommendations Summary Section 4.2.3).

Nuisance Tree Example Definition:

A nuisance tree is a tree that causes issues with the built environment and meets specific criteria and cannot be corrected by reasonable practices such as pruning, bracing, or cabling. The criteria for nuisance trees vary by jurisdiction but typically include a tree causing obvious physical damage to

private or public structures, including sidewalks, curbs, roads, driveways, parking lots, building foundations, or roofs, or a tree that has sustained damage from past maintenance practices or naturally occurring events such as wind, ice, or snow-loading. This process will identify which nuisances qualify for removal and the documentation required (See Code Recommendations Summary Section 4.2.4).

3. Quantifying Tree Retention and Replacement

The City will no longer quantify tree retention and replacement based on a percentage of the total number of individual trees on a site. As noted in the applicability section, the new tree code will require a minimum tree density for every lot based on tree size using a Tree Density Credit Method. The City is also considering whether to include trees within critical areas toward density requirements (See Code Recommendations Summary Section 4.3).

The City will establish which City zones the tree density credit system applies to, such as low-density residential zones, mixed-use, and commercial zones. The City will also be considering:

- How restrictive or flexible the tree credit system will be.
- Will retention be required for Exemptioal Trees?
- Is strict retention required in all zones?
- Will different rules apply for tree removal when a property is vacant or when no development is proposed?

Tree planting requirements and standards would also be regulated by the Tree Density Credit Method. The City may explore additional replacement trees for Exceptional Tree Removals.

4. Flexibility

The City is evaluating development-related incentives/flexibility. Contractors and architects do not regularly utilize existing incentives. Current incentives include:

- Reductions or variations of the area, width, or composition of required open space and/or landscaping;
- Variations in parking lot design and/or any access driveway requirements;
- Variations in building setback requirements;
- Height bonus in the MUR-70' zone.

The City will evaluate whether these these existing flexible regulations should stay in the code and also explore new height incentives in lower-density zones.

5. Tree Assessment, Documentation and Permitting

The City is evaluating in which circumstances a qualified professional should conduct a tree assessment and provide documentation, rather than the property owner or permit applicant. Tree data typically includes species, diameter at breast height (DBH), Height, and Condition (including any defects, diseases, or pests). Additional information may consist of existing infrastructure conflicts or conflicts with a proposed development project.

The City is also evaluating whether a permit is needed for all tree removal. The City is exploring a standard to require permits for all tree removals to better track data. See *Section 5 Code Administration Considerations* of the Code Recommendations Summary for additional information.