

CHAPTER TEN: URBAN FORESTRY

NOTE: An asterisk () denotes text material adopted by Thurston County as the joint plan with Olympia for the unincorporated part of the Olympia Growth Area.*

BACKGROUND

There are cities whose reputation for attractiveness and livability rests heavily on the abundance of "stately trees" and "tree-lined streets." Such reputations do not come easily. They are born of appreciation, care, and effort over many years. Olympia can and should be such a community: a "City of Trees" with many large old trees bearing witness of the heritage we leave for our children.

Olympia is still a city of many grand trees, though their numbers are declining. The City lost approximately 430 acres of wooded areas between 1980 and 1990. To stem the loss of trees and to encourage replanting, this chapter of the Comprehensive Plan sets policies for the protection and replacement of our urban trees. One of the most urgent concerns is to encourage preservation and appreciation of the magnificent trees that still remain. In so doing, we hope to awaken our citizens to the many important contributions trees make to the city's quality of living. Trees contribute to cleaner air and water, flood and erosion control, summer shade, beauty in bud, bloom, leaf, and structure. Often overlooked or ignored is the contribution of trees to the serenity of natural silence because they absorb or mask noise from surrounding sources. And, somewhat less tangible, they give a sense of continuity with forms of life which began long before our own, and which will carry on long after our passing.

Urban areas--especially older, established ones--offer a rich assortment of trees not only in terms of size and maturity but also in terms of species. Along with trees native to the region, such areas abound in a wide variety of non-native trees, planted by immigrants bringing seeds and seedlings as living reminders of flora they had left behind. Such trees, tenderly cared for, are now ours to enjoy in the magnificence of their maturity. As we enjoy them it is well to consider that they represent in part our forebears' tenuous hold on immortality. As we care for them and add to them, we shape an important part of our lives, and leave a legacy for our descendants.

VISION

This is the vision of Olympia in our future:

Trees of various species, ages, and sizes are growing in all parts of the city, contributing to a green and healthy community. Tall slender conifers accentuate and add beauty to the skyline. Graceful tree branches arch over busy thoroughfares and quiet residential streets. Wooded corridors weave through the city, providing for coexistence of wildlife habitat, play areas for children and recreational space for all citizens. These trees give character to the City's neighborhoods and shopping areas. Trees create streets friendly to walkers and a buffer between people and the hard edges of buildings and roads. People of all ages and walks of life are active in planting and caring for trees, demonstrating their faith in, and commitment to, posterity. Evergreen trees grow throughout the city, a visual reminder of the special character of the Pacific Northwest. Deciduous trees mark the seasons, connecting us visually with the passage of time. Shady areas in public places welcome citizens on a summer's day and provide shelter from the rain. These trees help ensure that this Olympia of the future will remain a most livable community.

THE VALUE OF AN URBAN FORESTRY PROGRAM

Trees are a valuable public resource, an important element of our daily lives. They enhance the quality of our working environment, and are an important backdrop to our activities with family and friends. They help to provide visual buffers and natural beauty, preserve the natural character of an area, and soften the impact of buildings and streets. They help reduce air pollution, noise and glare. They cool us in summer and insulate us in winter. They prevent soil erosion, and reduce siltation and flooding. They provide habitat for wildlife, and are a source of food and materials for human habitation as well.

The City of Olympia should preserve and enhance this natural resource, by encouraging the preservation and maintenance of trees on public and private lands, protecting trees from unnecessary removal or damage during development, and promoting the planting of new trees. The City should be a leader in urban forestry practices, including the development of state-of-the-art standards and criteria for design, planting and maintenance, for both public and private development projects.

It is also important to plant or preserve "the right tree in the right place." With respect to overhead utilities, for example, an appropriate tree for retention would be one which either has a very low potential for failure; or one which, if it were to fall or blow over, would not land on overhead utilities. An appropriate tree for planting near overhead utilities would be one which would not need excessive pruning to allow for the proper clearance of power and other utility lines. This can include short-growing trees that are not expected to grow tall enough to need clearance pruning. It can also include narrow columnar trees which, when planted to one side of the utility lines, will not need excessive clearance pruning.

When people appreciate the value and contribution of trees, they are more likely to protect them. The City should therefore emphasize public education regarding the benefits derived from trees, bringing the issues relating to trees to public attention, and reinforcing the value of trees to the public and to property owners. Ordinances will be needed to ensure appropriate and equitable management of the urban forest. Good planning and design, and the efforts of many people, will be needed to make the vision a reality. Recognition and encouragement should be given to residents, developers, and other citizens who enhance the urban forest. All these will be important in making Olympia truly a "City of Trees."

GOALS AND POLICIES

GOAL TREE1. To recognize and use trees in the city to help achieve our other land use goals.

POLICIES:

- TREE 1.1 Existing trees and new tree plantings should be a significant part of Olympia's visual identity, contributing to a special "sense of place" within the Pacific Northwest.
- TREE 1.2 Incompatible land uses and activities should be separated by preserving wooded areas or by planting

appropriate new trees to create a wooded buffer area.

- TREE 1.3 Residential neighborhoods should be buffered from the adverse effects of adjoining roadways and development by using stands of existing or planted trees.

GOAL TREE2. To make Olympia a beautiful place to live in or visit by lining our High Density Corridors and our entry and exit corridors with trees.

POLICIES:

- TREE 2.1 Street trees should be a high priority for any public improvements within Olympia's High Density and Entry/Exit Corridors. Tree plantings in both public and private development should adhere to the design guidelines for those corridors.
- TREE 2.2 New tree plantings within the Corridors, including both street trees and trees on private development, should create a pattern of visual continuity and a sense of visual order, define a strong edge to the street corridor, and reinforce the sense of gateway or entrance to the City.

GOAL TREE3. To bring a sense of natural beauty into the Downtown, our most urban area, by planting trees.

POLICIES:

- TREE 3.1 A coordinated pattern of street trees should be planted and maintained within the Downtown, with consideration given to impacts on views, utilities, and pedestrian/vehicular traffic.
- TREE 3.2 Tree plantings should be designed to lend variety and provide a sense of human scale to the street, enhancing the pedestrian environment.
- TREE 3.3 The few remaining large trees in downtown, such as those in Sylvester Park and along Legion Way, should be given special care and protection.
- TREE 3.4 Other tree plantings should adhere to the Downtown Area Design Guidelines.

- TREE 3.5 The City should work with downtown groups on public/private cooperative efforts in tree planting and preservation.
- TREE 3.6 In the vicinities of the Port and West Bay Drive, trees should be used to create a buffer between terminal or industrial operations and adjacent land uses (without blocking views).

GOAL TREE4. To recognize the special requirements for preserving and enhancing the urban forest so that the human environment can exist in harmony with nature.

POLICIES:

- TREE 4.1 An urban forestry program should be established to provide education, encouragement and assistance for planting and preserving trees on private property and street frontages.
- TREE 4.2 Public entities and private interests should work together on a city-wide beautification program.
- TREE 4.3 The City should encourage design and installation using tree species appropriate to an urban setting. Tree placement, size and species selection should consider hardiness, traffic safety and sightline restrictions, pedestrian safety, potential for damage to property, impacts on existing and proposed utilities, and contributions to habitat. *[See also utility policies U 9.1 and U 9.2 in Chapter Five, Utilities and Public Services.]*
- TREE 4.4 Placement of new overhead wires, sidewalks and underground utilities should be designed to minimize impact on existing or proposed trees, within public rights-of-way and on private development. *[See also utility policies U 9.1 and U 9.2 in Chapter Five, Utilities and Public Services.]*
- TREE 4.5 All land development and site work should be conducted in a manner which preserves appropriate existing vegetation and trees.
- TREE 4.6 Existing trees within a development project should be an important factor in its site planning, including determination of building and parking

- locations and their specific configuration.
- TREE 4.7 In order to preserve existing trees, buildings, parking and other development should minimize grading or terrain alteration around or within the dripline of such trees, using structural alternatives to minimize disturbance where needed.
- TREE 4.8 Native tree species should be used to enhance the habitat as appropriate in new project landscaping.
- TREE 4.9 Opening up views, or protecting views, should be one consideration in deciding whether to preserve or plant trees.
- TREE 4.10 Sizes, densities and placement of trees should be commensurate with the scale of parking areas and should help reduce their visual impact.
- TREE 4.11 Sizes, species and locations of trees should foster a sense of human scale and enhance the urban street environment.
- TREE 4.12 Design of tree planting and preservation plans should reflect current professional standards.
- TREE 4.13 On lands being converted from timber production, a variety of appropriate tree species in naturalistic settings should be preserved for use in future development of the property.
- TREE 4.14 Planting and preservation designs for public and private development should consider the environmental benefits of trees, such as reduction of soil erosion and flooding, aquatic habitat protection, replenishment of oxygen, filtration of dust and air pollutants, and reduction in the rate of global warming. (Ord. #6140, 08/28/01)

GOAL TREE5. To take advantage of the economic value contributed to the City by its trees.

POLICIES:

- TREE 5.1 Requirements for protecting existing trees and planting new ones should recognize the role trees play in enhancing the value of private property.
- TREE 5.2 Trees should be an important part of public investments being made for

economic development and redevelopment activities.

TREE 5.3 Substantial tree plantings will contribute to Olympia's natural beauty and potential for tourism, and should form an important part of a network of scenic roadways and streets.

GOAL TREE6*. To manage the urban forest to maximize its contribution to wildlife habitat and recreational opportunities.

POLICIES:

TREE 6.1 Projects should be designed so that stands of existing and planted trees on contiguous property are linked, wherever possible, to provide a continuity of habitat for the movement of wildlife throughout the city.

TREE 6.2* Existing and planted trees should be a significant part of a system of pedestrian walkways, bike paths, urban trails and other open space corridors linking neighborhoods in Olympia and its Growth Area with each other and with nearby communities.

GOAL TREE7. To manage the urban forest in a way that recognizes its effect on wise energy use.

POLICIES:

TREE 7.1 Allowing for appropriate levels of solar access, wind protection, or shade to living spaces within a development and/or on adjacent property should be considered in decisions to preserve existing trees or plant new trees.

GOAL TREE8. To maintain strong and healthy neighborhoods by planting and protecting trees.

POLICIES:

TREE 8.1 Tree plantings within neighborhoods should be used to help foster a sense of neighborhood identity.

TREE 8.2 Existing trees with historic significance or other value to the whole community, as well as to specific neighborhoods, should be identified, protected and maintained.

ELEMENTS OF AN URBAN

FORESTRY PROGRAM

To implement Olympia's Urban Forestry Policies, an Urban Forestry Resource Management Program, incorporating elements such as the following¹, may be developed and implemented by the City:

? An Urban Forestry Management Plan for Olympia, to include capital improvements, on-going maintenance, programs, and public events coordination, design review, development of design manuals and educational materials, and enforcement. Public and private utilities should be invited to participate in the development of the Urban Forestry Management Plan.

? A Landmark Tree Protection Ordinance to apply to trees which have been identified by the community as needing protection due to their special value in that they are irreplaceable by any means.

? A Tree Protection and Replacement Ordinance to apply to private and public development, restricting land clearing and requiring use of state of the art techniques in site design, grading design, tree protection, and mitigation of construction impacts.

? Modifications to the existing Landscape Ordinance to encompass new tree planting and tree replacement requirements which enhance habitat.

? A new Street Tree Master Plan for Olympia, to include major arterials, the downtown area and neighborhoods.

? Funding mechanisms to ensure full implementation of the Urban Forestry Management Plan.

? Professional staffing needed to implement the Management Plan, providing appropriate expertise in the fields of urban forestry, landscape architecture and arboriculture.

¹Although the ultimate names or organizational format may change, each of these elements may be included in the Urban Forestry Resource Management Program.

- ? Training programs for City staff and the development community to increase their effectiveness in planting and preserving trees in an urban setting.
- ? A public involvement program to encourage volunteer participation in planting and caring for trees.
- ? An Interdepartmental Coordination System, to include Parks, Public Works, Community Development and Planning, as well as all appropriate public and private utilities.
- ? Standards and Criteria Manuals for design, implementation and maintenance, incorporating best management practices (BMP's) from the fields of urban forestry, landscape architecture and arboriculture.
- ? Educational material for the public and for design professionals, such as a Citizens Street Tree Guide, a List of Recommended Species, Techniques for Tree Planting and Maintenance, and Plantings which Enhance Wildlife Habitat.

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