

**From:** [Jan Stewart](#)  
**To:** [City Council](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Ordinance 833  
**Date:** Friday, August 10, 2018 12:33:26 PM  
**Attachments:** [08.10.18.ltr.to.council.trees.pdf](#)

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Attached is my comment letter on Ordinance 833.

Thank you.

Jan Stewart

August 10, 2018

Dear Council and Staff,

*"Why pay money for the horror movies? Just go to a street without trees!"*  
— Mehmet Murat ildan

I strongly disagree with the current form of Ordinance 833, and hope your minds are still open to considering alternatives that include preserving and/or replacing trees in MUR70 zones. Having high density zones exempt from Shoreline's Tree Code is indeed a dismal vision for these neighborhoods. Are you absolutely certain you're not inadvertently planning our future ghettos?

*"To be poor and be without trees is to be the most starved human being in the world. To be poor and have trees is to be completely rich in ways that money can never buy."*  
— Clarissa Pinkola Estés

While I am happy to hear that there is promising funding for increasing park land, (and presumably more trees) that won't eliminate the negative impact on quality of life for those living in large buildings with no trees on the property.

From the 1970's until now, temperatures in the Western US have increased by 2 degrees, and are expected to rise an additional 2.5 – 6.5 degrees by mid-century from greenhouse gasses caused by humans. The U.S. Forest Service found in 2018 that US cities are losing 36 million trees each year. With a decreased amount of vegetation, cities also lose the shade and cooling effect of trees, and the removal of carbon dioxide. Tall buildings provide multiple surfaces for the reflection and absorption of sunlight, increasing the efficiency with which urban areas are heated. Buildings also block wind, inhibiting cooling by convection and prevents pollutants from dissipating. Waste heat from automobiles, air conditioning, industry, and other sources also contributes to urban heating. The station areas where MUR70 zones exist will be highly susceptible to these conditions.

*"Even viewed conservatively, trees are worth far more than they cost to plant and maintain. The U.S. Forest Service's Center for Urban Forest Research found a ten-degree difference between the cool of a shaded park in Tucson and the open Sonoran desert. A tree planted in the right place, the center estimates, reduces the demand for air conditioning and can save 100 kilowatt hours in annual electrical use, about 2 to 8 percent of total use. Strategically planted trees can also shelter homes from wind, and in cold weather they can reduce heating fuel costs by 10 to 12 percent. A million strategically planted trees, the center figures, can save \$10 million in energy costs. And trees increase property values, as much as 1 percent for each mature tree. These savings are offset somewhat by the cost of planting and maintaining trees, but on balance, if we had to pay for the services that trees provide we couldn't afford them. Because trees offer their services in silence, and for free, we take them for granted."*  
— Jim Robbins, *The Man Who Planted Trees: Lost Groves, Champion Trees, and an Urgent Plan to Save the Planet*

I am hoping that Shoreline is willing to learn from and avoid the problems experienced by other cities. Shoreline doesn't have to follow this pattern of losing trees incrementally over time with increased development, forcing future generations to try to recover. Shoreline has an opportunity to instead show leadership in finding a balance that not only houses the community but also reflects the community's values and addresses worsening climate conditions.

*In the middle of difficulty lies opportunity.*  
— Albert Einstein

I believe the often recited conclusion that we can have either high density affordable housing or trees, but not both, is a false narrative. Yet, this now seems to be the view of the majority on the council. This is surprising since Council previously supported having the Tree Code apply to MUR70. The reversal of this position was accompanied by a request for staff and the Planning Commission to review MUR70 for tree conservation, which resulted in no tree conservation in MUR70. This is not only confusing, it's the kind of "process" that fosters distrust.

*"The conventional view serves to protect us from the painful job of thinking."*  
— John Kenneth Galbraith

I know Shoreline can do better. Buildings and trees can cohabit in Shoreline! It's simply a problem that our very skilled staff and council members are more than capable of solving. Of the several amendments to be considered at Council on the August 13<sup>th</sup>, I would support elements in each. In general, if site conditions make tree preservation impossible, then replacement should be mandatory. Frankly, all sites should be designed in such a way to accommodate trees. Also, based on comments made at the July 30<sup>th</sup> Council meeting, I am concerned that some tree saving incentives suggested, such as building height, may be highly unlikely to be utilized by developers. To include such "incentives" would be to obfuscate the process, so please be sure to include only incentives that will likely be attractive to developers. And finally, I hope that if you are unable to come to an agreement on Monday August 13<sup>th</sup> to amend the ordinance, that you will postpone your vote until the problem is worked and a solution found that allows trees to exist in the high density zones council created. If you allow for the elimination of trees, reversing the resulting damage later will be an even more difficult and long-term process than the current one. Trees belong here in the Northwest, they are our heritage. Let's do the right thing.

*No problem can withstand the assault of sustained thinking.*  
— Voltaire

Thank you very much for your work and for reading and considering my letter.

Jan Stewart  
Shoreline resident

P.S. More irresistible quotes follow -

*"Tree planting is always a utopian enterprise, it seems to me, a wager on a future the planter doesn't necessarily expect to witness."*  
— Michael Pollan

*“Planting trees may be the single most important ecotechnology that we have to put the broken pieces of our planet back together.”*  
— Jim Robbins, *The Man Who Planted Trees: Lost Groves, Champion Trees, and an Urgent Plan to Save the Planet*

Excerpts from *The Eagle Tree* by Ned Hayes:

*“Most of the trees are already dying. All across North America from Mexico to Alaska, forests are dying. Seventy thousand square miles of forest—that’s as much land as all of the state of Washington—that much forest has died since I was born. What if I am growing up in a world that will not have trees anymore by the time I am my grandfather’s age?”*

*“Many people think trees grow so big from soil and water, but this is not true. Trees get their mass from the air. They gobble up airborne carbon dioxide and perform an act of chemical fission by using the energy from sunshine. Essentially, trees are made of air and sunshine.”*

*“We are part of a system that includes trees. Without trees, we will eventually fall.”*