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From: [Bill Franklin](#)

Sent: Monday, March 21, 2022 3:54:36 PM

To: [City Council](#)

Cc: [Sara Raab McInerny](#); [Jean Hilde](#); [Jeff Potter](#)

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Citizen Advisory Group for Tree Regulations | City Council Meeting -- 21 March 2022

Sensitivity: Normal

Attachments:

[220321 Letter to City Council regarding Tree Regulations.pdf](#); [211117 Citizen Advisory Group for Tree Regulations Recommendation.pdf](#);

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Honorable Members of the Shoreline City Council,

We would like to respectfully offer the attached documents related to the agenda topic scheduled for the 21 March 2022 City Council meeting.

Thank you,

Bill Franklin
Sara Raab McInerny
Jean Hilde
Jeff Potter

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Bill Franklin, AIA, **LEED AP** ■ **FRANKLIN** architecture ■ **IN+FORM** innovative structures

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21 March 2022

Honorable Members of the Shoreline City Council,

The attached packet, previously sent to you on November 17th of 2021, is an outline of our carefully-considered recommendations based on real-world experience in Architecture, Development, and Landscape Architecture, within Shoreline and our surrounding communities. We would like to place particular emphasis on two of the included recommendations, one related to the definition of a "Significant Tree", and another, our recommendation to use "Total Diameter Inches" of Significant Trees when calculating retention.

Within the packet, if you refer to item #2, "Definition of a Significant Tree", we indicate that Shoreline is the only City in our region which does not define a Significant Tree as 6" or greater dbh (diameter at breast height, or about 4' above the ground). We understand that one opposing viewpoint suggests that if we redefine Significant Trees in this way, it will result in more trees being calculated, and then more trees being removed. However, the fatal flaw of this viewpoint is the presumption that all other trees, currently not defined as significant, would otherwise remain in place. In fact, almost all trees not defined as Significant Trees are slated for removal in development projects, and there is no way to monitor this since those trees are not currently regulated.

Please refer also to item #3, "Change Tree Retention Calculation to use "Diameter Inches" of trees". Shoreline is fortunate to have a varied mix of younger and older trees within our Urban Canopy. We point out that when Tree Retention calculations are based solely on the quantity of trees, then smaller trees can be retained while significantly larger trees are removed. We strongly advocate for using "diameter inches" when calculating tree retention, and cite our reasoning within the recommendation packet. The City of Bellevue uses this calculation for tree retention, and its development and integration of its trees benefits greatly.

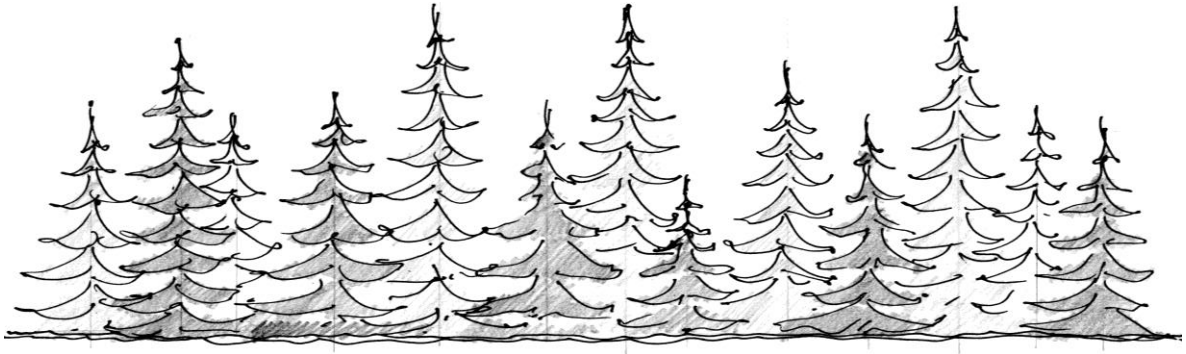
In closing, we encourage you to move quickly on these action items and avoid further delay. While we are waiting, we are losing more and more trees every day.

Thank you again for considering our recommendations,

A Citizen Advisory Group on Tree Regulations:

Bill Franklin, RA, LEED AP
Sara Raab McInerney, PLA, ASLA

Jean Hilde, J.D.
Jeff Potter, MBA



Trees in Shoreline

*the stewardship of our urban forest
and approaching the paradigm of
our neighboring communities*



17 November 2021

Honorable Members of the Shoreline City Council and Shoreline Planning Commission,

Our current Shoreline Municipal Code requires a degree of Tree Retention during project development, but the code is constrained by a legacy of aged *King County* code language and lags far behind the current regulations of our surrounding nearby communities and adjacent jurisdictions. Substantive change to our outdated code is urgently needed in order to maintain our urban forest and approach the level of significance which all other jurisdictions place on fostering and retaining critically important Significant Trees.

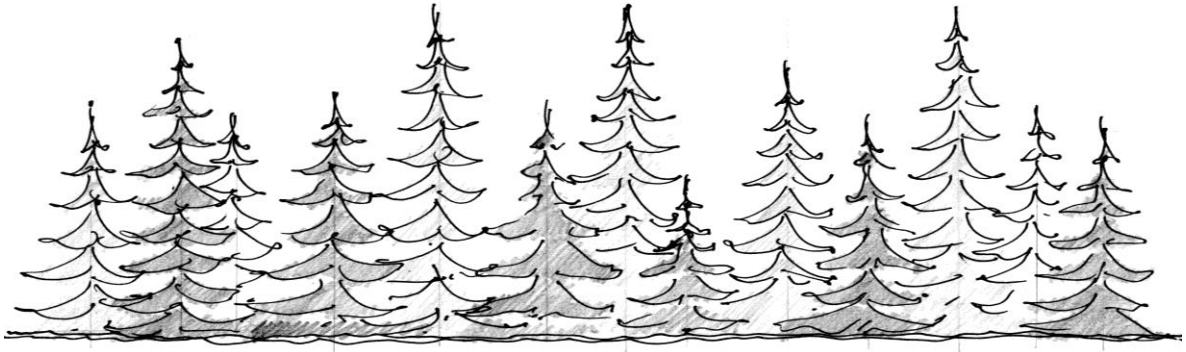
Although we are each Members of the PRCS/T Board, we are not representing the Board, but rather representing our own views as a Citizen Advisory Group on Tree Regulations. We appreciate your thoughtful consideration of the following recommendations.

Sincerely,

A Citizen Advisory Group on Tree Regulations:

Bill Franklin, RA, LEED AP
Sara Raab McInerney, PLA, ASLA

Jean Hilde, J.D.
Jeff Potter, MBA



1. Think of Trees as Integral to a Project, rather than an Impediment

Neighboring jurisdictions require thoughtful integration of existing trees into a project. One notable comparable neighbor, as an example, is the City of Bellevue. Bellevue requires Tree Retention for all Single-Family projects, as well as all Subdivisions, Short Subdivisions, and Planned Unit Developments. Zones requiring Tree Retention for these project types, *in addition to all Residential Zones*, include the commercial and mixed-use zones shown in the diagram below: (credit: Bellevue Development Code).

Professional Office	Office	Office/Limited Business	Office/Limited Business 2	Light Industry	General Commercial	Neighborhood Business	Neighborhood Mixed Use	Community Business	Factoria Land Use District 1	Factoria Land Use District 2	Factoria Land Use District 3
PO	O	OLB	OLB 2	LI	GC	NB	NMU	CB	F1	F2	F3

As Shoreline continues to grow in population and density, and as our neighborhoods develop to support the growing population, there must be an intentional balance struck between maintaining the character of neighborhoods and supporting the creation of a new urban realm. We believe that retaining and protecting Shoreline's urban tree canopy is a critically important part of this equation throughout all areas of our city.



A commercial Office Park in Bellevue with thoughtfully-integrated mature Significant Trees (credit: Google Earth)



2. Definition of a "Significant Tree" should be changed to 6-inch dbh

Every neighboring jurisdiction defines a "Significant Tree" as *any* tree with a **6"** or greater dbh (diameter at breast-height, or 4'-6" above ground) measurement for all trees, without regard for species. However, Shoreline defines a "Significant Tree" as a *Coniferous* tree with an **8"** or greater dbh, and a *Non-Coniferous* tree with a **12"** or greater dbh. Shoreline Planning Staff acknowledges this definition is an inherited legacy from aged code language prior to Shoreline's incorporation, and was never crafted specifically for Shoreline, by Shoreline. The following diagram illustrates surrounding jurisdictions with a 6" or greater dbh definition for Significant Trees:



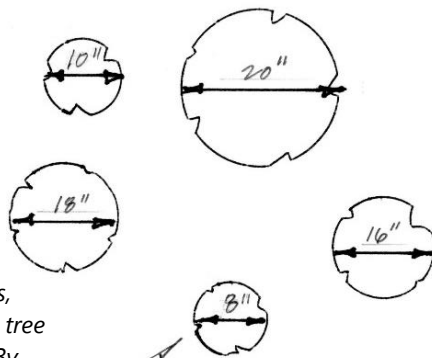
(Graphic: Bill Franklin / Franklin Architecture. Data: Jean Hilde)



3. Change Tree Retention Calculation to use "Diameter Inches" of trees

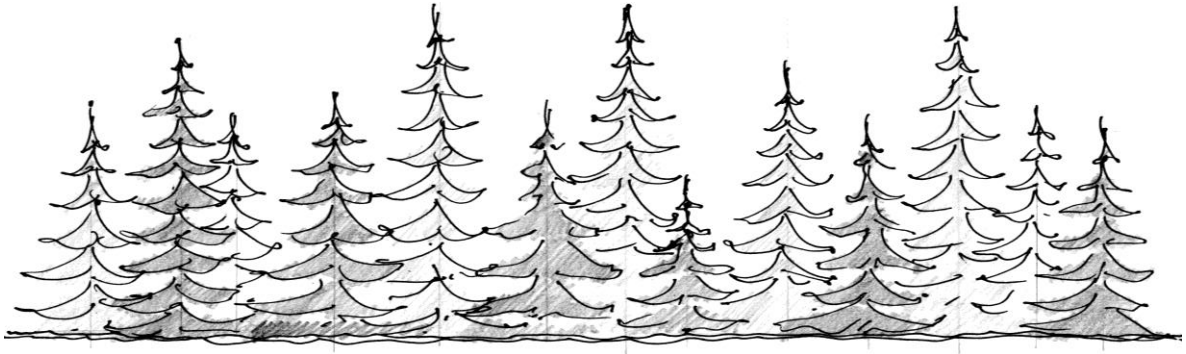
When the Shoreline Municipal code uses a minimum Tree Retention percentage based on tree quantity, such as retaining a "minimum of 20 percent" of the Significant Trees, one might presume the intent would be to retain at least 20 percent of the existing urban forest. However, an array of existing trees will certainly vary with respect to their sizes. Using the Shoreline requirement for retention, one could in fact remove all of the largest significant trees, and retain only the smallest trees. Using this methodology, if a site is home to ten Significant Trees, and eight of the trees are 26" in diameter, and two of the trees are 8" diameter, one could meet the tree retention requirement by simply cutting down the eight 26" diameter trees and retaining the two 8" diameter trees, significantly reducing the existing tree canopy, and in fact retaining only 7% of the existing urban forest, rather than the intended 20% minimum.

The City of Bellevue, for example, wisely **requires** the use of "Tree Diameter Inches" for the Tree Retention Calculation. Therefore, if a site is home to ten Significant Trees, and eight of the trees are 26" in diameter, and two of the trees are 8" diameter, one cannot simply cut down the eight largest diameter trees and retain the two smallest diameter trees to meet the retention requirement. Instead, one must calculate the total tree diameter inches for all significant trees, and then retain the specified percentage of "diameter inches" of the significant trees. This provides for flexibility in project development, and the intended minimum retention of the existing tree canopy.



Using an example of five trees, current code would allow this tree to be the only one retained. By using "Tree Diameter Inches", a larger tree, or a combination of trees, would be retained instead.

Tree Retention Calculation	
tree	size
A.	10"
B.	20"
C.	18"
D.	8"
E.	16"
total	72"
20% min. retention = 14.4"	
30% min. retention = 21.6"	



4. Increase retention percentage of Significant Trees

The City of Shoreline currently requires only 20% of Significant Trees to be retained, while other jurisdictions require a greater percentage to be retained. For example, the City of Bellevue requires 30% of Significant Trees to be retained for any Single-Family project, or any Subdivision, Short-subdivision, or Planned Unit Development within any of the aforementioned zoning areas.

In performing the “Tree Diameter Inches” calculation, several jurisdictions also allow for Alder and Cottonwood trees to be discounted by a factor of 0.5. Although the definition of “Significant Tree” remains the same, the diameter inches may be discounted when performing retention calculations. Based upon the characteristics of these tree species, we agree and support the strategy of discounting Alder and Cottonwood tree diameter inches for the purpose of Tree Retention calculations.

Increasing the Tree Retention percentage beyond the current 20% retention requirement will be a significant step toward preserving Shoreline’s existing trees.



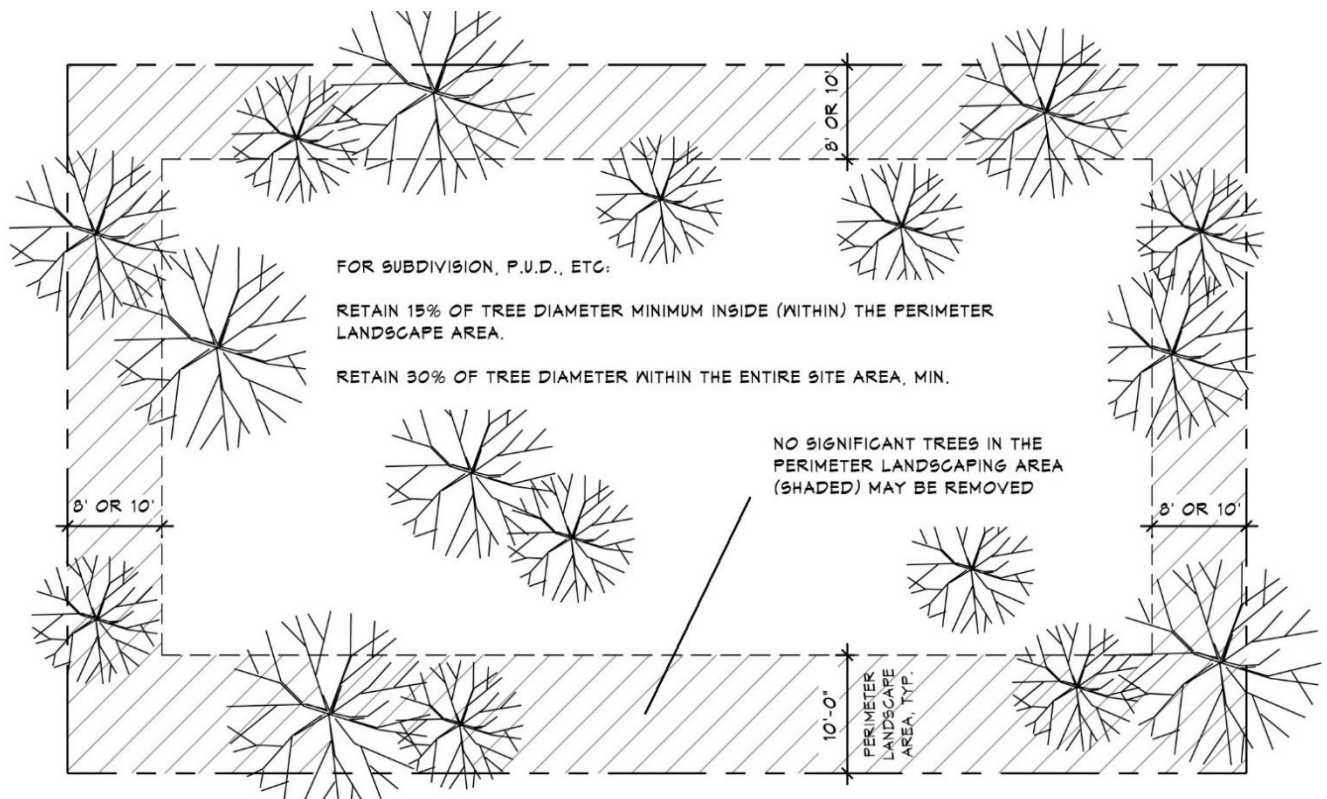
Carefully-integrated Significant Trees create a distinguished and desirable place (credit: Mithun)



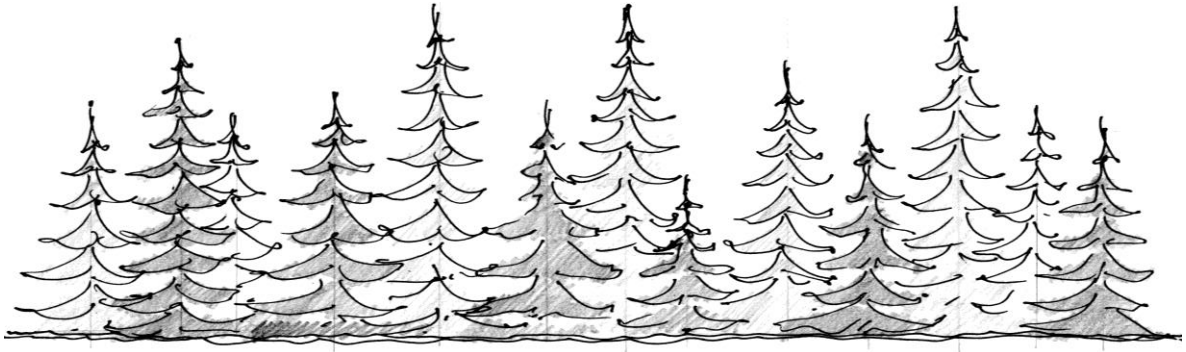
5. Balance the retention of Perimeter and Interior Trees

The City of Bellevue requires a Perimeter Landscaping Area for all Subdivisions, Short Subdivisions, and Planned Unit Developments, in all zones. For those types of projects, **every** Significant Tree within the Perimeter Landscaping Area **must** be retained, and they are exempt from the calculation concerning Tree Retention at the interior of the site. This is an important strategy for retaining Significant Trees at the outer perimeter, while also maintaining retention of trees at the interior of a site (in this case, a minimum of 15% retention at the interior, 30% min. total site). The Shoreline Development Code implies a preference for retention of trees near the perimeter, but does not require it, and does not require a mandatory mix of perimeter and interior Tree Retention.

We recommend adopting such a strategy in our Development Code as it would greatly benefit Subdivision and Planned Unit Development here in Shoreline.



Basic Diagram of the Perimeter Landscape Area, and required retention of ALL significant trees within that zone
(Graphic: Bill Franklin / Franklin Architecture)



6. Monitoring and Maintenance of Replacement Trees and Street Trees

Currently, the Shoreline Development Code requires a 3-year Maintenance Period / Bond for replacement trees at Planned Unit Development Projects, but not for Single-Family lots. For Single-Family zoned lots, if no Maintenance Period or Bond is required, there is no accountability for the retention or survival of new required Replacement Trees. If a new home is constructed on a Single-Family lot, the existing owner, or a new Owner, could immediately remove the required Replacement Trees, negating the intent of incorporating the Replacement Trees into the project. We recommend a transferrable 3-year maintenance bond be required at new Single-Family projects, to match the requirement at other projects.

Similarly, with the many challenges affecting the success of new street tree plantings, we strongly recommend an evaluation of the City's monitoring and maintenance program for new right-of-way plantings to ensure their survival. In the example below, a new P.U.D. project required new sidewalks, amenity strips, and (9) new Street Trees. Soon after the project was finished, the street trees became stressed and died. At the end of the three-year bond period, the dead trees were eventually replaced with new trees, and we understand the ownership and maintenance then transferred to the City. Shortly thereafter, six of the nine newly-replaced trees died, and have not yet been replaced. We recommend this evaluation of the City's monitoring program to ensure the survival of these important elements of our urban forest in Shoreline.



(credit: Bill Franklin, improvements located at the intersection of Ashworth and 165th)



(sketch: Bill Franklin)

In Conclusion

Residents across Shoreline continue to passionately advocate for a higher priority on the preservation of our existing urban forest. We also understand that Shoreline has a reputation for having lenient Development Codes related to Tree Retention, and we have illustrated here a few of the variances which exist between our codes and those of our neighboring communities.

The idea that an improved Tree Retention Code may be undesirable if it may result in more trees being retained, or more Replacement Trees being required, or additional Permit Review being necessary, should not dissuade the implementation of the changes, as that may demonstrate why the improvements would be beneficial. Further, it has not discouraged our neighboring communities from implementing a greater level of Tree Preservation, as we have documented here.

Taking steps to strengthen the existing Tree Retention requirements will result in increased mature tree canopy in conjunction with new development. We are hopeful that you will consider our recommendations and join us in placing a greater priority on our Significant Trees and critically important urban forest in Shoreline.



The integration of Significant Trees creates a symbiotic relationship between the Natural and Built Environment
(credit: Google Street View)