



City of Tacoma
Community and Economic Development Department

Agenda Item
GB-2

TO: Planning Commission

FROM: Donna Stenger, Long-Range Planning Division Manager

SUBJECT: Annual Amendment # 2012-6: Urban Forestry Code Revisions

DATE: September 1, 2011

On September 7th, the Planning Commission will begin its discussion of proposed changes to the landscaping-related provisions of the Land Use Regulatory Code, intended to implement recent policy direction on Tacoma's urban forest. Staff from the City's Environmental Services and Long-Range Planning Divisions will provide an overview of the project's proposed scope and objectives. The presentation will summarize the relevant policy direction, and place the code discussion in the broader context of implementation steps currently underway. Staff will then provide an overview of the City's current landscaping code approach, and initiate a discussion of code concepts regarding landscaping.

Our urban forest (which is broadly defined to include all trees and vegetation) has been the focus of extensive policy discussion and City Council direction over the past several years. In 2010, the City Council adopted the Urban Forest Policy Element, following the 2008 adoption of the Open Space Habitat and Recreation Element. These elements recognize that the urban forest provides a broad range of public benefits and set far-reaching goals to improve its health and function, and increase its extent. The new elements increase the emphasis on the natural and environmental benefits. In addition, the Comprehensive Plan and other City policy documents recognize other important roles of the urban forest, including its function as part of streetscapes (complete streets), and as an integral urban design and aesthetic consideration. This body of policy direction, summarized in Attachment 1, will inform the development of proposed landscaping code changes.

This project will focus on changes to the City's code governing landscaping (and related issues). The Plan calls for a range of actions that could be implemented through code changes, including the following:

- Achieve a 30% citywide tree canopy coverage by the year 2030;
- Incorporate flexible code approaches tailored to the needs of differing land uses;
- Seek opportunities to increase storm water benefits through landscape requirements;
- Integrate public safety considerations into landscape requirements;
- Enhance the urban forest connection between natural areas and developed areas.

Though the focus is on code, the project is best understood within the context of related efforts currently underway. Staff from the Urban Forestry Program are working on a variety of fronts to achieve urban forest goals. Key ongoing efforts include the following: City projects; incentives and assistance; education and outreach; technical guidance; and, review of regulatory

approaches. Furthermore, the regulatory changes currently under consideration fall into two broad categories: Code pertaining to public property and rights-of-way; and, code pertaining to private property development. It is this last category, governed by the Land Use Regulatory Code and therefore under the Planning Commission's purview, which will be the focus of our effort.

Tree canopy coverage will be a central concept to this project. Canopy coverage is generally defined as the area of ground covered by the extent of tree foliage. It is closely linked with benefits including oxygen production, air temperature reduction, air and water quality benefits, greenhouse gas reduction, wildlife habitat, noise reduction, building energy conservation, prolonged infrastructure life, and sociological/physiological and aesthetic benefits. Canopy coverage is an excellent tool with which to set community-wide goals and is increasingly being utilized as an indicator for the overall health of the urban forest. Some jurisdictions are also taking the step of building canopy coverage into their regulatory approach. Attachment 2 provides a summary of other jurisdictions' approaches to tree canopy goals and regulations.

Tacoma's 2009 tree canopy coverage has been estimated by the University of Washington Seattle at 19%. This benchmark establishes the amount of progress that must be made in order to achieve the "30 by 30" vision. The canopy coverage goal is not meant to indicate that every area of the City must achieve 30% coverage—rather, specific targets could be developed for each land use, such that the citywide average would be 30%.

In summary, staff will be seeking the Commission's input and guidance on how best to incorporate the latest policy direction into Tacoma's landscaping code. Tacoma's current landscaping code approaches are characterized by an emphasis on promoting aesthetics, screening and buffering, and uniformity (particularly of street trees). Attachment 3 summarizes the current landscaping code approach. This project will consider opportunities to better incorporate urban forest health and extent, and to consider the application of canopy-based approaches to the code.

To facilitate the Commission's review and discussion, staff has prepared three attachments:

- #1: City Landscape-Related Policies Summary
- #2: Examples of Canopy Goals and Regulations
- #3: Current TMC Landscape Code Triggers & Requirements

If you have any questions or requests please contact Ramie Pierce at 591-2048 or trees@cityoftacoma.org, or Elliott Barnett at 591-5389 or elliott.barnett@cityoftacoma.org.

Attachments (3)

c: Peter Huffman, Assistant Director

Attachment #1

CITY LANDSCAPE-RELATED POLICIES SUMMARY

Policy Title	General Policy Guidance
<u>Policy</u>	<u>Goals</u>
Urban Forest Policy - Comp Plan	UF-PR-1 Promote tree retention through incentives and credits UF-PR-2 Flexible Regulatory Approaches UF-PR-3 Protect trees during development UF-PCM-5 30% Tree canopy cover by 2030 UF-PCM-9 Survival of newly planted trees UF-PCM-10 Landscape Maintenance Management Plans UF-PD-2 Design infrastructure with thorough consideration of trees UF-PD-3 & 4 Soil conservation and reduce compaction UF-PD-5 Align landscaping regulations with Low Impact Development (LID) techniques for stormwater management UF-S-2-4 Diversity in species, type and age UF-S-8 Encourage green roofs on new buildings and retrofits UF-RPD-4 Alternatives to tree grates
Open Space Habitat and Recreation – Comp Plan	OS-GI-3 “Green corridors” to connect natural areas OS-GI-5 Native and climate-adapted tree planting and maintenance OS-GI-6 Incentives and outreach for voluntary plantings OS-GI-7 Sustainable development practices citywide OS-GI-8 Street design to incorporate green infrastructure approaches OS-HA-1 Achieve a citywide gain in habitat functions OS-HA-2 Habitat Corridors are priority for conservation & restoration OS-HA-7 Sustainable City practices within Habitat Corridors OS-HA-12 Identify regulatory approaches to protect Habitat Corridors
Environmental Policy Element – Comp Plan	E-LID-1 Encourage use of LID stormwater techniques E-LID-2 Development in Mixed-Use Centers (MUCs) to provide vegetated cover, including LID stormwater techniques E-SA-5 Preserve large trees within residential neighborhoods; new tree plantings to preserve existing views E-FW-2 Encourage landscaping that supports wildlife habitat E-FW-3 Plant native landscaping to improve habitat function E-FW-10 Promote natural corridors as part of developments
GLUE – Comp Plan	LU-UAD-10 Emphasize individualized streetscape design LU-UAD-16 Enhance public safety through Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) LU-UAD-19 Incorporate CPTED in development activities LU-MUD-1 Ensure compatibility within MUCs, including landscaping LU-MUD-10 Green infrastructure and landscaping in MUCs LU-MUD-18 Provide landscaping to enhance environment of MUCs LU-RDG-14 Multi-family development compatibility, including landscaping, to buffer lower density neighborhoods

	<p>LU-RDD-2 Compatibility with existing development, including landscaping</p> <p>LU-RDD-4 Emphasize natural qualities, including trees</p> <p>LU-RDD-13 Utilize landscaping to improve livability</p> <p>LU-CDD-3 Attractive, well-maintained landscaping in pedestrian areas</p> <p>LU-CDD-8 Landscaping to enhance commercial areas</p> <p>LU-CDHI Landscaping/street trees in high intensity commercial areas</p> <p>LU-IDD-3 Landscaping to screen industrial parking, loading, storage, utility areas</p> <p>LU-IDLI-5 Landscaping to minimize industrial development’s impacts</p>
Transportation - Comp Plan	<p>T-TSM-3 Design streetscapes for traffic calming (includes trees and landscaping)</p> <p>T-MS-12 Implement Complete Streets (includes trees and landscaping)</p>
Neighborhoods - Comp Plan	<p>C-4.6 Use LID techniques, including bioretention systems</p> <p>NET-1 Protect and preserve the natural environment</p> <p>NET-1.2 Retain vegetation that is visually attractive</p> <p>NET- 1.2 Maintain or provide new vegetation</p> <p>NET-4.3 Require developers to provide and maintain landscaping</p> <p>ST-6.4 Trees in rights-of-way and in mini-parks</p> <p>W-7.4 Tree preservation</p> <p>N-7.3 Public notification for tree cutting</p> <p>ST-2.4 Landscaping beautification of business districts</p> <p>ST-6.7 Encourage streetscape with street trees</p> <p>DT-4.4 Street trees for creating interface and within medians</p>
Shoreline Management Plan (Planning Commission recommended draft)	<p>6.7 Promote continuous landscape planting as a unifying urban design feature to link shoreline areas</p> <p>7.10.2 Parking areas require landscaping</p> <p>Thea Foss Waterway Design Guidelines: Guidelines for types of trees and vegetation preferred, view considerations and streetscapes.</p>
Climate Action Plan	<p>26. Increase tree planting requirements or incentives</p>
Complete Streets Design Guidelines – Mixed-Use Centers (MUCs)	<p>1.2.2 Street trees and landscaping are integral to livability of MUCs</p> <p>2.2.1 Street trees are an essential streetscape component</p> <p>2.2.1 Consider CPTED in landscaping choices</p> <p>2.4.2 Incorporate LID stormwater techniques in street design</p> <p>2.4.3 Street trees and landscaping contribute to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pedestrian comfort • Calming traffic • Neighborhood identity • Environmental benefits • Economic benefits/energy savings
Complete Streets Design Guidelines – Residential	<p>2.2 Street trees and LID stormwater approaches serve multiple goals</p> <p>2.3.4 Street trees are standard for all street designs</p> <p>2.3.7 LID stormwater approaches should be routinely incorporated in local residential street design</p>

Attachment #2

EXAMPLES OF CANOPY COVER GOALS AND REGULATIONS				
CITY	CITY WIDE CANOPY COVER GOAL	CURRENT CANOPY COVER	CANOPY COVER GOAL BY LAND USE	REGULATIONS BASED ON LAND USE
SEATTLE	30%	23%	Yes	In Progress
PORTLAND	30-40%	30%	Yes	In Progress
LAKE FOREST PARK	43% minimum	Not Defined City Wide	Yes	Yes
WOODINVILLE	No	?	?	Yes
VANCOUVER	Not Defined City Wide	19.7%	Yes	Removals Only
PUYALLUP	In Progress	In Progress	In Progress	In Progress
RENTON	In Progress	29%	In Progress	Potentially in the Future
TACOMA	30%	19%	In Progress	In Progress

Attachment #3

CURRENT TMC LANDSCAPE CODE TRIGGERS & REQUIREMENTS

Exemptions and exceptions: These requirements apply citywide, though there are exceptions and/or exemptions from various landscape requirements in each zone district depending on the specific development proposal. This table presents only a few examples of many exemptions and exceptions.

Exemption	
Single-family dwellings	No landscaping requirement in any district.
Two-family and three-family dwellings	Landscaping required only when located in a Mixed-Use district.
Exception	
Overall site landscaping	Percentage does not include area covered by structures. Therefore, if the entire site is covered, no overall site landscaping is required.
Perimeter landscaping	May be broken by primary structures. Therefore, if the entire site is covered, no perimeter strip is required.

This table summarizes the landscaping requirements for each type of zone district.

Zoning Districts:	Triggers	Requirements
Single Family Residential	Conditional uses only (new or expanded). Does not apply to residential development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overall site percentage • Site perimeter strip • Parking area trees • Street trees
Multiple Family Residential	All new development; except single, two- and three-family dwellings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overall site percentage • Site perimeter strip • Parking area trees • Street trees
Mixed-Use	All new development, including structures and/or parking lots and alterations to existing development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overall site percentage for residential uses only • Buffer planting areas • Foundation planting • Parking lot perimeter strip • Trees planted along walkways • Trees required at parking lot aisle ends • Trees required in parking aisles • Street trees
Commercial	Same as Mixed-Use	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overall site percentage • Site perimeter strip • Buffer planting areas • Parking area trees • Trees planted along walkways

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Street trees
Industrial	Same as Mixed-Use	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overall percentage of parking lot area • Perimeter strip along arterial streets • Buffer planting areas • Trees planted along walkways • Street trees
Downtown	Same as Mixed-Use	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overall percentage of parking lot area • Perimeter landscaping strip adjacent to sidewalks required around parking lots • Planters to obscure view of parked cars on new or altered parking garages • Street trees