

TREE REGULATION UPDATE ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING RECAP

July 11, 2023

Want to stay in the loop about tree regulation? Here's what you need to know.

THE CONTEXT:

Earlier this year, the Bend City Council created a temporary committee – The Tree Regulation Update Advisory Committee (TRUAC) – to explore preserving trees during new development while producing needed housing in the community.

The Council has explicitly directed this committee to focus on rules related to new, large-scale developments – like large subdivisions or commercial projects – rather than regulating what an individual homeowner, for example, chooses to do with a tree on their property.

THE DISCUSSION FOCUSED ON:

- Deciding what trees should be preserved during development.
- Factors that decide the importance of a tree, such as species, height, age, and others.
- What do other cities do in their codes to preserve trees?

WHAT OTHER CITIES DO:

Cities across the American West take a variety of approaches when it comes to deciding how trees need to be preserved during development. Some options include requiring developers to keep trees with a specific diameter at breast height (4 ½ feet off the ground). Several Washington cities have rules based on whether the tree is at the property's perimeter versus on the interior. Some don't require a certain percentage or size of the tree to be preserved and instead allow developers to pay a fee. Read the [spreadsheet under agenda and materials on the webpage](#) for more details on what different cities do.



WHAT THE COMMITTEE SAID:

The discussion was wide-ranging and is still ongoing. Here are the high-level themes:

- Defining trees into two categories: regulated and priority. Regulated trees are trees that a developer would need to count when mapping out how many trees are on the property and possibly preserving a percentage of them. Priority trees would need to be kept in some way due to their significance in size.
- Several members expressed interest in preserving larger trees because they provide environmental benefits like taking carbon out of the atmosphere, providing more shade, and reducing stormwater runoff.
- Several members asked for flexibility in the code, including ideas like having different standards for different species of trees.
- In general, members supported the idea that a priority tree should have a diameter of 20 inches instead of 24 inches, the current standard in a city plan called the Southeast Area Plan. The goal is that a 20-inch diameter would capture larger trees for preservation.
- The committee had differing opinions about having different standards for different species of trees. Some on the committee felt Junipers should not be treated the same as other species, like Ponderosa Pines, while others thought they should be considered an asset to protect.
- Having standards that preserve diversity and mirror the natural environment today was also stated as a priority by group members.
- Considering equity was also a part of the discussion. In this context, that means ensuring the east side of town and lower-income areas have the same tree preservation considerations as the west.

For the entire conversation, watch a recording of the meeting on [YouTube](#).

COMING UP: CONTINUING THE DISCUSSION

The conversation will continue from 4 p.m. to 6 p.m. on July 27. A vote will need to take place to provide direction to city staff.

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