

Proposed Urban Forestry Goals, Policies for the Natural Environment Chapter

The following goals are an expansion of the existing goals and policies in Chapter 1 of the Comprehensive Plan: See Goal 1.3 and Policies 1.3.1, 1.3.2; Goal 1.4 and policies 1.4.1 and 1.4.2; Goal 1.6, second bullet; Policy 1.6.4; Goal 1.7 and policy 1.7.4; Goal 1.8, policy 1.8.3 and 1.8.6; Goal 1.10, Policy 1.10.12

Goal 1: Trees are recognized by Tukwila citizens, businesses, City staff and decision-makers for their benefits to the environment (air quality, habitat, climate change), urban infrastructure (stormwater attenuation, slope stability, temperature) and their aesthetic value (economic benefits, safety/crime reduction, visual and recreational benefits, etc.) *Note: a discussion of the benefits of trees will be included in a narrative section that introduces the goal, so they won't need to be in the goal itself).*

Policies for Goal 1:

1. Develop a formal urban forest management plan to promote and guide preservation, restoration and maintenance of a sustainable urban forest, using the goals and policies of this chapter (as a basis) for guidance.
2. Ensure that the benefits of trees are factored into site design and permit decisions.
3. Ensure that regulations recognize that larger trees provide more benefits than small trees.
4. Seek to create and fund an urban forester/municipal arborist position within the City, or contract for such services, to provide expertise for urban forest management planning, oversight of tree planting and maintenance, and assistance to all City departments that have responsibilities for tree management.
5. Educate the public, elected officials and City staff about the importance of and benefits provided by trees in Tukwila.
6. Develop tree valuation methods to reflect the value trees provide, for use in assessing fines, determining damages or estimating loss of tree benefits.
7. Identify funding sources to support urban forestry planning and management and establish an urban forestry budget and account.
8. Consider developing an "exceptional" or "heritage" tree program to foster tree appreciation in the community.
9. Encourage public involvement in urban forest stewardship through volunteer events, free training workshops, and other means.

Goal 2. Tree Canopy Goal: Overall city-wide tree canopy increased to a total of 28% by 2028 by achieving the following goals for different land use categories:

Industrial zones: 1 % increase to 14% cover
Medium and High Residential Density zones: No net loss to maintain current 40% cover
Low Density Residential: No net loss to maintain current 47% cover
Office and Commercial: 1% increase to 30% cover
Tukwila Urban Center and Tukwila South: 3% increase to achieve 16% cover

Policies for Goal 2:

1. Promote tree retention throughout the City by:
 - a. implementing educational programs for property owners and managers;
 - b. exploring incentives for tree retention and planting;
 - c. prohibiting tree removal on all undeveloped property without an approved development permit;
 - d. protecting healthy stands or groves of trees on property proposed for development through changes in regulations, including incentives; and
 - e. requiring financial assurances for required tree replanting and maintenance.
2. Improve retention of trees on steep slopes through modifications in regulations, ensuring the evaluation of the role that trees play in slope stability during geotechnical reviews, and by providing incentives.
3. Require in-kind replacement of trees where removal is allowed to ensure that replacement trees at maturity will have similar canopies to that of the removed tree(s), except where existing or future infrastructure impedes the planting of large trees.
4. Require protection of trees for all public and private infrastructure installation or maintenance, and require the presence of a certified arborist when working in the critical root zone. Where damage to trees is not avoidable, require replanting or payment into a tree replacement fund as compensation.
5. Require professional assessment of damaged trees and require corrective actions to restore tree health or replace trees that are not likely to survive and thrive.
6. When all required replacement trees cannot be accommodated on a site, require off-site planting of replacement trees, or payment into a dedicated tree replacement fund.
7. Identify potential tree planting locations on publicly owned properties and develop tree planting and urban forest rehabilitation programs for City parks and other publicly owned lands. Collaborate with other agencies, such as Washington Department of Transportation to promote planting in highway interchanges and other locations.
8. Collaborate with other government, non-profit organizations and private sector entities to promote urban forest management and restoration.

Goal 3. Tukwila's streetscapes and landscaped areas are sustainable and attractive and its urban forest is healthy, diverse, and safe.

Policies for Goal 3:

1. Encourage retention of existing healthy trees wherever possible, through regulations, incentives, and education.
2. Develop tree/urban forest inventories and assess the health of trees and forests in Tukwila's public spaces.
3. Develop maintenance plans and programs for trees on City property or rights-of-way to ensure that maintenance pruning is properly carried out, diseases and pest infestations are managed, hazardous trees are identified and managed in a timely manner to reduce risks, and invasive vegetation is managed.
4. Modify codes and educate property owners, property managers, landscape maintenance companies and tree companies to promote best practices for soil preparation, planting techniques, pruning, trenching, and general tree care.
5. Ensure that landscaping and replacement trees in new development or re-development are properly cared for and thrive in perpetuity, through such means as maintenance agreements, monitoring and enforcement.
6. Develop a mechanism to ensure that tree removal and maintenance companies have the necessary qualifications and liability insurance for work in Tukwila.