

Tukwila Tree and Environment Advisory Committee Achievement Highlights

1. The Committee was tasked with providing Comprehensive Plan guidance on existing and new goals and policies for the natural environment element of the Plan and helping develop new goals and policies for a new component of this element: urban forestry. It should be noted that many policies are related to State and Federal requirements with which the City must comply.
2. To summarize, the Committee worked on goals and policies related to:
 - a. environmental quality and stewardship;
 - b. water resources (including sensitive areas, water quality and surface water management, and flood control)
 - c. earth resources;
 - d. archaeological, paleontological and culturally significant resources; and
 - e. urban forestry.
3. The Committee heard presentations on the following topics: setting the context for planning and an general overview of the current Comprehensive Plan goals and policies for the Natural Environment and urban forestry and the benefits of trees; Urban and Community Forestry presentation by Linden Meade, Washington DNR; Preliminary Results of Urban Tree Canopy Assesment by Ian Scott, Davey Resource Group; Regulatory Context, Natural Environment Chapter; Current Tree Policies and Regulations; and Urban Forestry and Tree Regulations – Comparison of Other Jurisdictions’ Approach.
4. The Committee has reached consensus on all of the goals and policies to-date – a testament to the spirit of cooperation, consideration of a variety of viewpoints and open discussions the Committee has held throughout the process.
5. The Comprehensive Plan goals and policies ultimately adopted by the City Council will then be translated into the regulations and programs that implement the goals and policies.
6. The Committee has stressed many times that the City should use the approach of education, outreach programs and training as opposed to regulation, and where necessary to use regulations, regulations should allow for flexibility in meeting requirements.
7. Key areas of guidance provided by the Advisory Committee are summarized below by category. These goals and policies, if ultimately approved by the City Council will provide direction for the City in carrying out new efforts and programs, and in some cases revisions to regulations. In some cases the new goals and policies support existing city efforts and regulations; in other cases they suggest new efforts and regulations.
 - a. Environmental Quality and Stewardship (new policies):
 - Consideration of climate change in planning
 - Wildlife protection and education policies
 - Programs to promote environmental stewardship
 - b. Water Resources (new policies and revisions to existing policies):
 - Actions for restoration of sensitive areas and fish and wildlife habitat
 - Prohibiting new fish barriers and promoting removal of barriers
 - Improving the effectiveness of sensitive area mitigation
 - Consideration of fee-in-lieu programs for wetland mitigation
 - Provision of sensitive areas management technical assistance to businesses and residential citizens

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- Protect sensitive area hydrology when development occurs
 - Increase in public education about protecting water quality
 - Improvement of water quality monitoring
 - Continuation and improvement of flood control actions
 - Promote use of low impact development techniques
- c. Earth Resources (revisions to policies):
- Consideration of the role of trees in slope stability and require areas where vegetation must remain undisturbed
 - Requirement of setbacks from top of slope
- d. Archaeological, Paleontological, and Cultural Resources (revisions and new policy)
- Relocating the section into Community Image Chapter to be combined with historical resource section
 - New policy recognizing the importance of cultural resources, some of which are natural areas
- e. Urban Forestry (new goals and policies that would create new programs and revisions to existing landscape, tree and vegetation on public right-of way regulations)
- Creation of an urban forester/municipal arborist position or consultant contract that would serve all City Departments and could assist the public
 - Development of a comprehensive urban forestry plan
 - Adoption of new standards and production of guidance manuals on tree selection, care, and protection
 - Development of programs to educate the general public, businesses, developers and programs to involve the community in stewardship of the urban forest
 - Establishment of tree canopy goals for different land use categories
 - Prohibiting removal of trees, except for hazardous trees, on undeveloped residential parcels without an approved permit;
 - Incorporating more flexibility into the landscape code, while improving tree canopy
 - Improving tools for enforcement when required trees are removed or damaged

8. Next steps:

- a. A joint City Council/Planning Commission work session meeting is proposed on June 24th so the Advisory Committee can present its recommendations to both bodies;
- b. The Planning Commission will hold a public hearing June 27th on the Committee's recommended goals and policies, take public testimony, review and consider revisions to the goals and policies and then forward recommended goals and policies to the City Council.
- c. The City Council will hold a public hearing on the Planning Commission's recommended goals and policies, take public testimony and then review and consider revisions to the goals and policies recommended by the Planning Commission and make final decisions on revisions to the goals and policies before adoption by the end of 2013.
- d. Implementation of new goals and policies will be through revisions to existing regulations and development of new programs and actions, many of which will be dependent on available budget. Regulatory revisions related to trees are anticipated for next year and will involve opportunity for public input and comment. This Committee should consider if it wants to be involved as an advisory body for these regulatory revisions.