

CITY OF ISSAQUAH
City Council
Planning, Development & Environment Committee

6:30 PM
July 8, 2025

MINUTES

Council Chambers, 135 E.
Sunset Way, Issaquah WA

COUNCIL AND ADMINISTRATIVE PERSONNEL PRESENT

Committee Members:

Zach Hall, Chair
Lindsey Walsh (*Attended Virtually*)
Kelly Jiang

Administration/Staff:

Wally Bobkiewicz, City Administrator
T. Cassidy Mueller, Deputy City Clerk

CALL TO ORDER

Chair Hall called the meeting to order at 6:30 PM.

PUBLIC COMMENT – None.

No members of the public spoke.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

- a) Minutes of June 10, 2025. There being no changes, the minutes were unanimously approved as presented.

AGENDA ITEMS

- a) **COM 0142 - Bellevue College Development Agreement Extension Request**

Presented by:

Minnie Dhaliwal, Director of Community Planning & Development
Jorge de la Torre, Bellevue College Vice President of Administrative Services

Committee comments included the following:

- Interest in partnering with Bellevue College to gather community input for their development plan.
- Interest in soliciting input from the Issaquah School District.
- Recommend ensuring that the public benefits from development of the property.
- If developing residential housing, ensure that the pre-existing paved trails on the property are maintained and have access points and that emergency evacuation times are considered and mitigated during development.
- Interest in understanding market rate vs. affordable housing options in Bellevue College's proposal, if extension is granted.

Given that there was not a clear majority opinion on this item, the Committee recommended it be placed on the July 21 City Council meeting agenda under Regular Business for discussion and consideration.

- b) **COM 0156 - Impact and Mitigation Fee Update**

Presented by:

Minnie Dhaliwal, Director of Community Planning & Development

Committee comments included the following:

- Interest in understanding how cost of living adjustments might affect impact fees over time.
- Recommend ensuring that impact fees are adequate to cover the actual cost of impacts.
- Recommend consideration of proposing a comprehensive impact fee evaluation in the next budget.
- Concern that the proposed model not scaling beyond 4,000 sq. ft. may incentivize larger developments.
- Interest in what models other cities are adopting.

The Committee recommended that this item be placed on the July 21, 2025 City Council Regular Meeting agenda on the Consent Calendar, unless the Dept. of Commerce provides guidance before then and it warrants further discussion.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Chair Hall announced that the Planning, Development & Environment Committee's next scheduled meeting is September 9, 2025.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at approximately 7:45 PM.

Zach Hall, Chair

T. Cassidy Mueller, Deputy City Clerk



Staff Report

COM # 0109 – Tree Preservation Code Amendments

Meeting Date Sept 9, 2025
Department Community Planning & Development
Staff Lead Minnie Dhaliwal, Director Community Planning & Dev
Exhibits

- A. Public Comment Matrix
- B. Change Matrix
- C. Proposed Title 18 Tree Code Amendments
- D. FACET Consultant Report
- E. Residential Lot Sizes in Issaquah
- F. Example Tree Canopy Scenarios
- G. Letter from Environmental Board

Direction Needed from Committee

The Administration is seeking input from the Planning, Development, and Environment (PDE) Committee regarding the 2025 Tree Code Amendments.

1. Are there any additional changes needed to draft code recommended by the Planning Policy Commission?
2. Does the Committee recommend proceeding with the proposed amendments at the Oct 6 Council meeting?

Background

In May 2023, the City Council adopted a major update to the Land Use Code. This update included a complete rewrite of the Tree Preservation code, following extensive public input, as well as feedback from Boards, Commissions, and the City Council. The initiative was the result of a multi-year, cross-

departmental effort aimed at preserving and enhancing the City's tree canopy, while also promoting sustainable development in alignment with the Issaquah Climate Action Plan.

As part of the 2023 update, the following changes were adopted into the tree code:

- Increased tree retention requirements
- Eliminated tree density as the primary metric for preserving trees
- Introduced tree canopy methodology
- Removed administrative adjustment of standards and required a public hearing variance process for code deviations

The following amendments propose policy level changes with the intent of still achieving the desired outcomes. Full descriptions of the major amendments can be found in Exhibit B and draft amendments in Exhibit C.

1. Revised Tree Canopy Cover Targets, including a proposal to set canopy cover by land use and lot size rather than by planning subarea.
2. Simplified regulations related to tree removal for hazardous/nuisance trees and replacement requirements for existing developed residential properties.
3. Clarified that compliance with tree canopy coverage is triggered with new and major development.
4. Added flexibility for tree retention requirements in the Central Issaquah subarea. (New Section)

Tree Canopy Coverage Methodology

These amendments propose policy level changes with the intent of still achieving the desired outcome identified in the Climate Action Plan. Full descriptions of the major amendments can be found in Exhibit B.

Our current methodology was developed in 2023, for the updated Title 18 IMC. Since its adoption, the City has received multiple comments from community members indicating that canopy percentage requirements, particularly for residential zoned properties, are too high. The current approach of using areawide canopy targets on a parcel-by-parcel basis has been difficult to administer fairly, because the methodology does not account for lot size. Instead, it considers the entire subarea and its potential for possible planting areas.

The proposed methodology utilizes specific land uses and, in the case of residential zoned properties, lot size when considering canopy coverage targets. This methodology was put together with the support from consultant FACET with their recommendations report provided in Exhibit D. Example scenarios using the new methodology are provided in Exhibit F. Under this methodology, onsite

replacement trees are more feasible to achieve, while still achieving our overall City-wide canopy coverage goals. To help visualize lot size impacts, data and graphics from the Middle Housing project, showing residential lot sizes in each neighborhood, are provided in Exhibit E.

Thresholds to Comply

Under the current code, when a tree removal results in canopy coverage below the target for its respective subarea, replacement trees must be provided at a rate necessary to meet the full canopy cover target for the site. This requirement has been inequitable for small lots and existing developments, as it is not proportionate to the action of removing trees. The new proposal is to require the replacement to be equal to or exceed the 20-year canopy coverage of the removed tree(s). This approach ensures proportionality to the removal while preventing canopy coverage loss over time. For all new or redevelopment projects, full compliance with the proposed canopy coverage targets is required.

Current Methodology	Proposed Methodology
Uses subareas	Uses zones
Problematic for small lots and existing development	Feasible for most lots and development
Overhanging trees not counted	Overhanging trees counted
Require canopy target for all tree removal	1:1 ratio for non-landmark tree replacement

Central Issaquah Flexibility

With the 2023 Title 18 update, administrative adjustment of standards for tree retention were removed from the code. As a result, all development in the Central Issaquah subarea must retain 25% of the total caliper inches of trees within the developable site area. The developable site area does not include wetland/stream buffers. Therefore, the proposed project is required to protect trees in the critical area buffers plus 25% of trees outside the critical area buffers. However, staff identified challenges in applying this tree retention requirement to new or redevelopment projects in Central Issaquah. The City aims to focus growth in Central Issaquah through infill development, but many properties are already developed and contain parking lot trees or perimeter landscaping. In these cases, the trees being retained may not survive redevelopment or may be unsuitable for the site, leading to retention for retention's sake. Introducing tree retention flexibility would allow infill development flexibility to allow growth, while still ensuring that the city meets the 20-year canopy coverage targets post-development.

Current Methodology	Proposed Methodology
25% caliper inches retention within developable site area	Uses zones
No flexibility to reduce	Flexibility for Central Issaquah only
Problematic for infill development	Feasible for most development
	Anything below retention – must pay into tree fund plus meet canopy coverage required for the zone.
	New target retention determined by arborist report with preference for retention of landmark trees and strands/grouping of trees.

Board and Commission Feedback

The Planning Policy Commission (PPC) and the Environmental Board reviewed the proposed amendments at the following meetings in 2025.

On [April 9, 2025](#), City staff met with the Environmental Board and received the following feedback:

- Conduct code testing.
- Clarify how tree fund is used.
- Address concerns with heat island effect.
- Re-examine multi-family targets; they’re too low.
- Coordinate the tree code update with wildfire mitigation and regulations.
- Provide an alternative approach to streamline multiple tree modification requests, such as HOA requests to remove multiple trees.
- Identify designated planting areas to support flexibility.

On [April 24, 2025](#), city staff met with the Planning Policy Commission and received the following suggested changes:

- Remove cabling from nuisance tree definition.
- Re-examine single-family targets as they are too high.

On [May 14, 2025](#), City staff met with the Environmental Board and received the following feedback:

- The City should consider doing public education around tree code.
- Clarify language so that it is clear to homeowners that tree removal for hazardous/nuisance tree is subject to 1:1 ratio and full canopy coverage requirement table is only required for new development or major redevelopment. For instance, the code states “not less than one tree” is required for tree removal implying more than 1:1 ratio could be required. Also, the canopy

coverage percentage table does not currently state that it does not apply to tree removal permits.

- Rules for single family should be simplified perhaps supplementary materials/handouts created to assist homeowner comply with tree code. Process should be less burdensome and less costly. The costs to pay for arborist assessment, tree removal and tree permit add up.
- Add the tree removal section for wildfire prevention under the nuisance tree section.
- Consider relief from replacement requirements for homeowners that lost trees due to severe storm events.
- Support flexibility for tree preservation regulations in Central Issaquah with more robust criteria that attempts to save strands of trees and landmark trees.
- The Board requested additional time to review amendments again, which resulted in additional meetings being added to the project schedule.

On [May 22, 2025](#), City staff met with the Planning Policy Commission and received the following feedback:

- Add a 5,000 square foot or less lot category.
- For Heat Disparity, focus on city-owned properties with a holistic approach.
- Clarify deciduous versus evergreen tree replacements.
- Consider adjusting hazardous tree exemption to encourage people to not let problems fester.
- Consider a tree give-away program for people who need to remove dead trees.
- The Commission agrees with the proposal to address wildfire risk mitigation on a lot by lot basis, based on assessment by the Fire Dept. This approach should be revisited after wildland urban interface code and wildfire risk maps are available,
- Include example site plans.

On [June 11, 2025](#), City staff met with the Environmental Board and asked five policy questions. Their feedback is included in the attached Exhibit G.

The PPC conducted a public hearing on [July 10, 2025](#) and voted unanimously to recommend the draft Tree Code for adoption with the following feedback:

- Staff to confirm that language supports that downed trees do not require a permit/arborist report.
- Central Issaquah flexibility is explained.
- HOA permitting is examined.
- Interplay between Critical Area Code and Tree Code is clarified.
- Examine 1:1 replacement language.
- Reach out to tribes regarding the Heritage Tree Program.

Impacts – Financial, Policy & Community

There are no direct financial impacts from this approval.

Timing & Next Steps

Oct. 6, 2025 – City Council action (tentative)