



Trees in the Right-of-Way Municipal Code Update

City of Tacoma | Environmental Services
and Planning and Development Services

Infrastructure, Planning, and Sustainability
September 13, 2023



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OVERVIEW



- Overview of *new TMC 9.20 – Urban Forestry
 - Street Tree Pruning
 - Street Tree Removal
 - Street Tree Planting
 - Exemptions
 - Tree Pruning on City Property for Views
 - Heritage Trees
 - Enforcement
- Resources
- Schedule & Next Steps

Tree Lined North
Union Ave



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● ● ● STREET TREE PERMIT - PRUNING



- Permit required to prune street trees (no fee)
- Tree pruning must meet ANSI A300 pruning standards (how you prune) and objectives (why you prune):
 - Reduce risk of failure
 - Reduce shade and wind resistance
 - Influence flower or fruit production
 - Improve aesthetics
 - Provide clearance
 - Maintain health
 - Improve a view
- Tree topping is prohibited

Schuster Pkwy Tree Pruning



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● ● ● STREET TREE PERMIT - REMOVAL



- Permit required to remove street trees
- Tree removal must be for one of the following:
 - Hazard Tree
 - Prohibited Tree
 - Significantly Damaged Tree
 - *Conflict Tree
 - Nuisance Tree
 - Fruit Tree
- 2 week posting of public notice required
- Tree replacement required
- No fee, unless *Conflict Tree

North Yakima Tree Removal



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● ● ● STREET TREE PERMIT - REMOVAL



- A *Conflict Tree interferes with:
 - a) Construction, installation, maintenance or repair of utility or ROW improvement;
 - b) development of real property abutting ROW; or,
 - c) damages existing improvements within the ROW or abutting property.
- Must be demonstrated that there are no reasonable alternatives to removal

Tree Assessment



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● ● ● STREET TREE PERMIT - REMOVAL

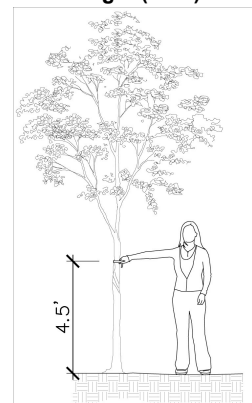


- Canopy Loss fee for *Conflict Tree removal:
- Permit administration fees plus Canopy Loss Fee
 - Measure removed tree's DBH (inches)
 - Subtract replacement tree's caliper (inches)
 - The remaining "canopy loss" (inches) includes a fee per caliper inch

$$\begin{aligned} &\text{Removed tree DBH (inches)} \\ &\text{- Planted tree(s) caliper (inches)} \\ &= \text{canopy loss (inches)} \end{aligned}$$

Canopy loss X \$ per caliper inch = Total Canopy Loss Fee

Diameter at Breast Height (DBH)



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● ● ● STREET TREE PERMIT - PLANTING



- Permit required to plant street trees (no fee)
- Must be a “permitted tree”:
 - a) Pre-approved tree species according to the UFM
 - b) Alternative tree species approved if:
 - i. climate adapted to the PNW
 - ii. meets visibility, clearance, and safety requirements
 - c) Must be planted according to the distance requirements in the design manual and UFM to avoid infrastructure conflicts

Tree Planting at Madison School



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● ● ● STREET TREE PERMIT - EXEMPTIONS



No permit required for:

- Small tree pruning (under 15 feet)
- Fruit tree harvesting and pruning
- pruning or removal to abate threat to public health, safety, welfare, or public nuisance (COT or DOT)
- pruning for construction clearance or to improve tree health (COT PW)
- Pruning for restoration of utility services and emergency communications
- Pruning for power utility service clearance under the National Electric Safety Code.

After the fact permit required for “Emergencies”

Fruit Tree Gleaning



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● ● ● TREE PRUNING – CITY REAL PROPERTY

- Individuals may request tree pruning on City property to enhance scenic views only when it will:
 - minimize risk of harm to people or property;
 - preserve and protect trees, and native forests;
 - protect public property investment;
 - not negatively impact habitat, soils, or slope stability; and,
 - have de-minimis impact on noise and air pollution, water quality, stormwater, and climate.
- Individual shall pay for all administrative costs, preparation of pruning plan, obtaining required permits, and the tree pruning work.

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● ● ● HERITAGE TREES

- Located on public or private property, in Tacoma
- Nominated by any member of the public
- Consent by the property owner required
- Designation:
 - Healthy condition
 - minimum 30" DBH or 65% of the largest documented size for that species in Washington
 - exemplary size, age, cultural or historical significance, ecological value, or rarity - considered irreplaceable.
- Heritage Tree Designation is not tree protection

State Champion Elm
Tree in Wright Park



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● ● ● ENFORCEMENT



- Max. monetary penalty ≤\$10k per day
- Min. monetary penalty (removal, topping, or severe damage) is the greater of ISA Guide for Tree Appraisal or \$500
- Natural Resources Damage Assessment
- Rebuttable Presumption – removal & pruning on public property
 - Property owners abutting public property where tree(s) have been pruned, removed, topped or damaged are presumed to have caused the violation, unless they provide evidence otherwise

Illegal Tree Removal Over Roadway



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● ● ● RESOURCES FOR IMPLEMENTATION

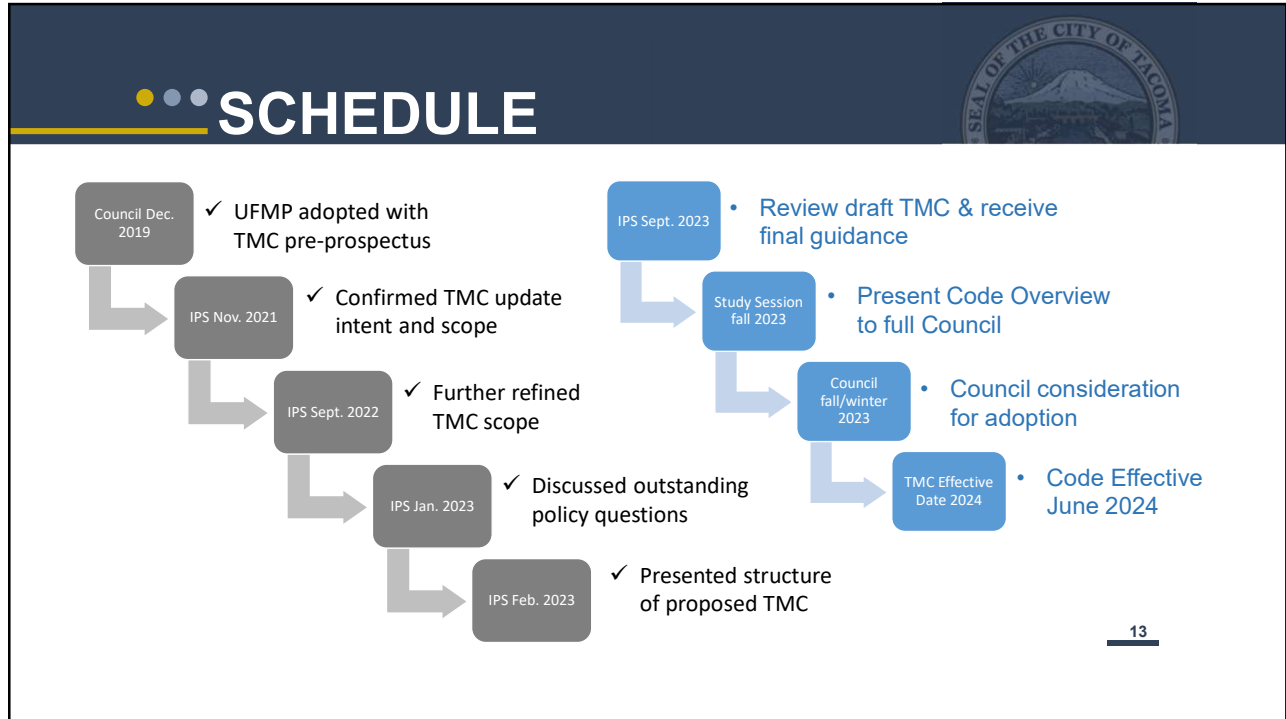


- Requesting authority to hire 1 FTE in 2024
- Code as drafted would collect fees to cover about 1/3 of the FTE.
- Seek Urban Forester and/or Arborist
- Will evaluate need for second FTE during 2025-2026 Budget



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● ● ● NEXT STEPS

- Present TMC update at Study Session, with IPS recommendation
- Bring ordinance to update TMC to City Council
- Following adoption, delayed effective date of June 2024, to allow for:
 - Staff training
 - Permit system updates
 - Public education and outreach
 - Creation of tip sheets and customer support
 - Staffing implementation

Madison Tree Planting

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