



## Clackamas County Urban Green

Email: [SaveTrees@ccurbangreen.org](mailto:SaveTrees@ccurbangreen.org) Web: [www.ccurbangreen.org](http://www.ccurbangreen.org)

March 12, 2010

Clackamas County Planning Commission

RE: March 22nd Hearing on County staff-proposed tree ordinance

Commission members:

Nearly three years ago, the members of Clackamas County Urban Green (Urban Green), alarmed at the continuous loss to development of the tree canopy that sustains and distinguishes our community, resolved to minimize this loss. For months we researched how other jurisdictions managed their urban forest canopy and what it would take to develop such a framework for our community.

On January 17th, 2008, we formally asked the Clackamas County Board of Commissioners (BCC) to establish a Tree Conservation Task Force to develop a tree conservation ordinance and establish an urban forestry commission to preserve, maintain and enhance the urban forest canopy in the unincorporated portions of the County inside the Urban Growth Boundary (UGB).

Some 8 months later, the County established a Trees Task Force (apparently the word "conservation" is anathema to the County). It consisted in the end of seven people, including two members of Urban Green, who wished to create a tree conservation ordinance and an urban forestry commission that would achieve the goals we had asked the Commission to pursue, and five people, including the chair, who did not. In spite of the dysfunctional management of the Task Force's process, and no attempt to produce a consensus result, over the course of more than a year, it produced some useful material to serve as a basis for an ordinance. In January of this year, County staff threw out the vast majority of this material and wrote their own proposed ordinance. It is that ordinance that is before you today.

The draft ordinance is clearly and carefully designed to achieve **none** of the goals associated with preserving, maintaining or enhancing our urban forest canopy or protecting the character of our community. It also seriously undermines the stated sustainability policies of the BCC. Instead, it systematically exempts almost every tree from regulation, under any circumstance, while imposing new costs for cataloging the destruction of our trees. While there may be some people who are cheered by this result, we find it appalling, and a betrayal of the values of most of the people in our community, especially those who have worked hard for years to achieve some measure of protection for our rapidly dwindling tree canopy.

The current draft ordinance can **not** be edited into something that serve the opposite purposes to those for which it was designed. It effectively proposes to accomplish nothing while imposing new costs. It must be completely overhauled.



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**In order to achieve the goals of the BCC, the ordinance must:**

- 1) be structured to preserve trees, not exempt them from regulation,**
- 2) apply to the vast majority of our remaining tree canopy,**
- 3) have serious and meaningful penalties for violations - penalties that amount to much more than a “cost of doing business” for developers and others,**
- 4) protect Heritage Trees, and**
- 5) provide for the creation of an urban forestry commission as stewards of our urban forest and its restoration.**

Because the current staff draft ordinance either does not address or undermines all of these goals and functions, we ask you to reject it in its entirety, returning it for a complete re-writing, in a manner that will fully meet the goals and objectives stated above.

As we said more than two years ago, we believe that it’s long past time for the County to manage its urban forests in a more sustainable manner, taking into consideration the property rights of all citizens, including neighborhood residents, even as development proceeds.

Thank you very much for your attention to this most important matter.