Tree Canopy Code Amendments Briefing

Study Session

Kristina Gallant, Senior Planner
Nick Whipple, Planning Manager
Development Services Department

December 14, 2022

City of Bellevue

Agenda

1. Policy Basis
2. Proposed Objectives
3. Existing Code and Opportunities
4. Process
5. Engagement
6. Council Direction

Policy Basis

Strategy N.1. Increase Tree Canopy Citywide

- 40% goal

- Ensure sufficient code provisions

- Incentivize the right tree in the right place

- Identify opportunities for tracking data
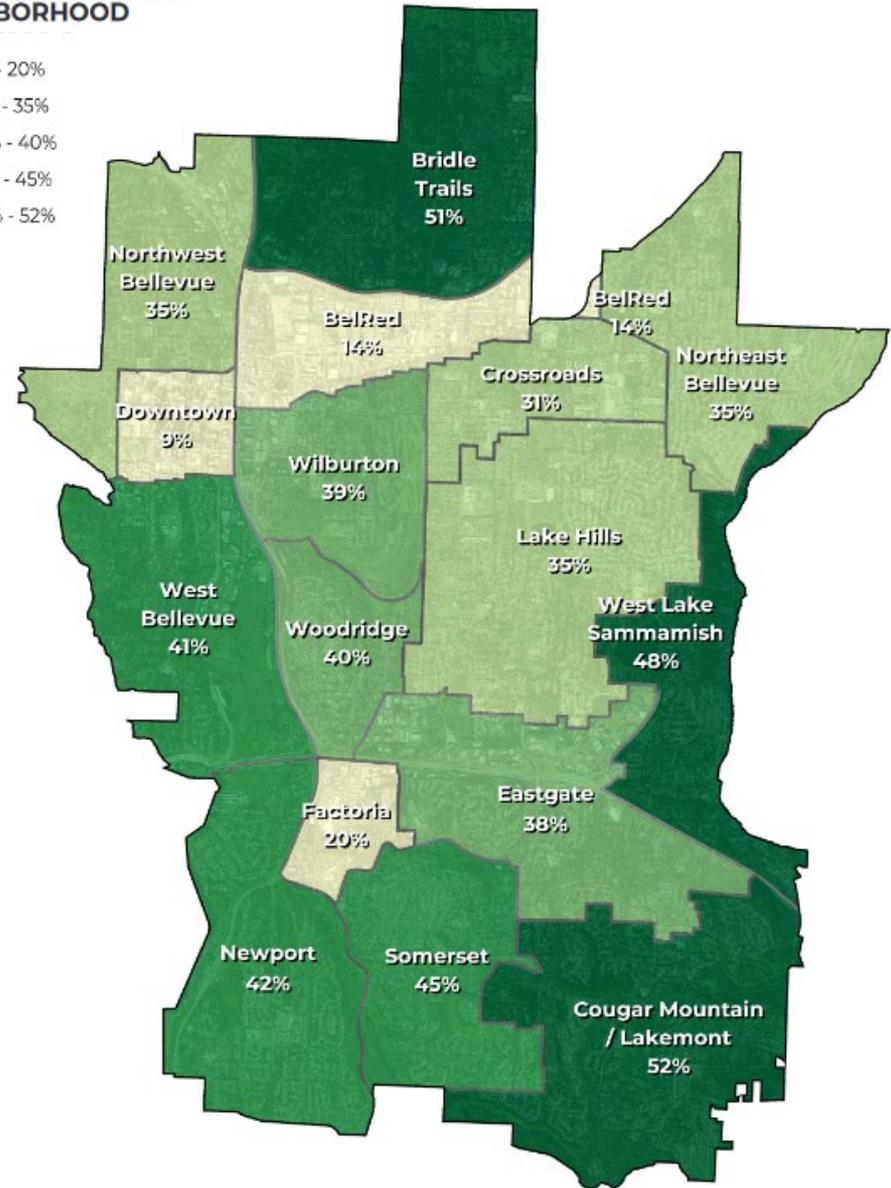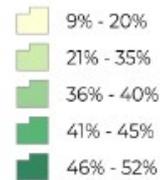
Policy Basis

Comprehensive Plan

- Policy EN-71: Preserve a proportion of the significant trees throughout the city in order to sustain fish and wildlife habitat

- Policy PA-31: Manage Bellevue's forest resources, including street trees, formal plantings, and self-sustaining natural stands, to ensure their long term vitality

Tree Canopy

- Citywide tree canopy estimated at 39%

- 3.4% increase from 2011-2019

- Opportunities for improvement remain

URBAN TREE CANOPY % BY NEIGHBORHOOD

- 9% - 20%
- 21% - 35%
- 36% - 40%
- 41% - 45%
- 46% - 52%

Bridle Trails 51%

Northwest Bellevue 35%

BelRed 14%

BelRed 14%

Northeast Bellevue 35%

Crossroads 31%

Downtown 9%

Wilburton 39%

Lake Hills 35%

West Bellevue 41%

Woodridge 40%

West Lake Sammamish 48%

Factoria 20%

Eastgate 38%

Newport 42%

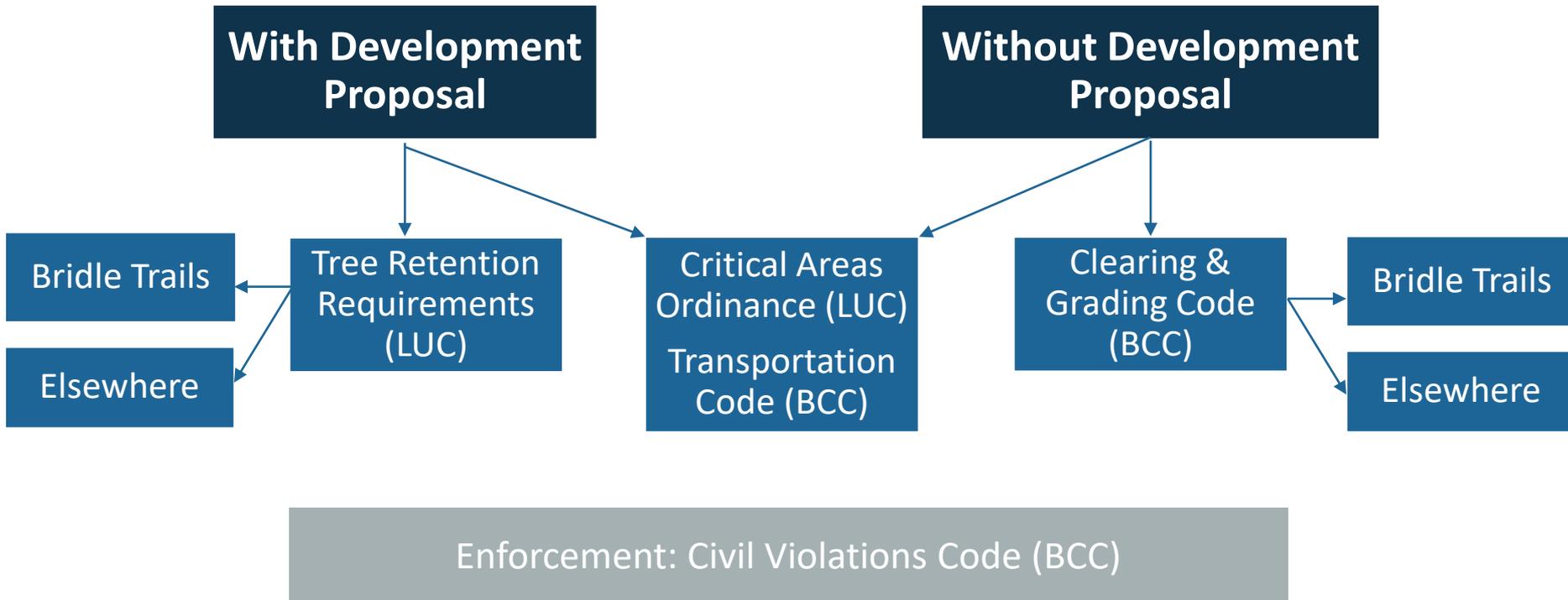Somerset 45%

Cougar Mountain / Lakemont 52%

Project Objectives

- Comprehensive code review
- Support tree preservation, retention, replacement, and protection
- Balance housing production needs
- Improve the function and clarity of code
- Capture better data

Existing Code

How do we regulate trees?

With Development Proposal		Without Development Proposal

Bridle Trails ← Tree Retention Requirements (LUC)

Elsewhere ← Tree Retention Requirements (LUC)

Critical Areas Ordinance (LUC) / Transportation Code (BCC)

Clearing & Grading Code (BCC) → Bridle Trails

Clearing & Grading Code (BCC) → Elsewhere

Enforcement: Civil Violations Code (BCC)

Existing Code

What trees are regulated?

- "Healthy" trees

- Minimum 8" diameter

- Landmark Trees

- Critical areas, landscape requirements

Opportunities

- *Evaluate Significant Tree Definition*

- *Evaluate Landmark Tree Implementation*

Without Development Proposal

Tree Removal

- Permit required to remove:
  - Any Landmark Tree (Interim Ord)
  - More than 5 significant trees within 3 years
  - Any significant tree in Bridle Trails R-1 district
  - More than 25% of the live crown of any significant tree

- Replacement only required in limited cases

Opportunities

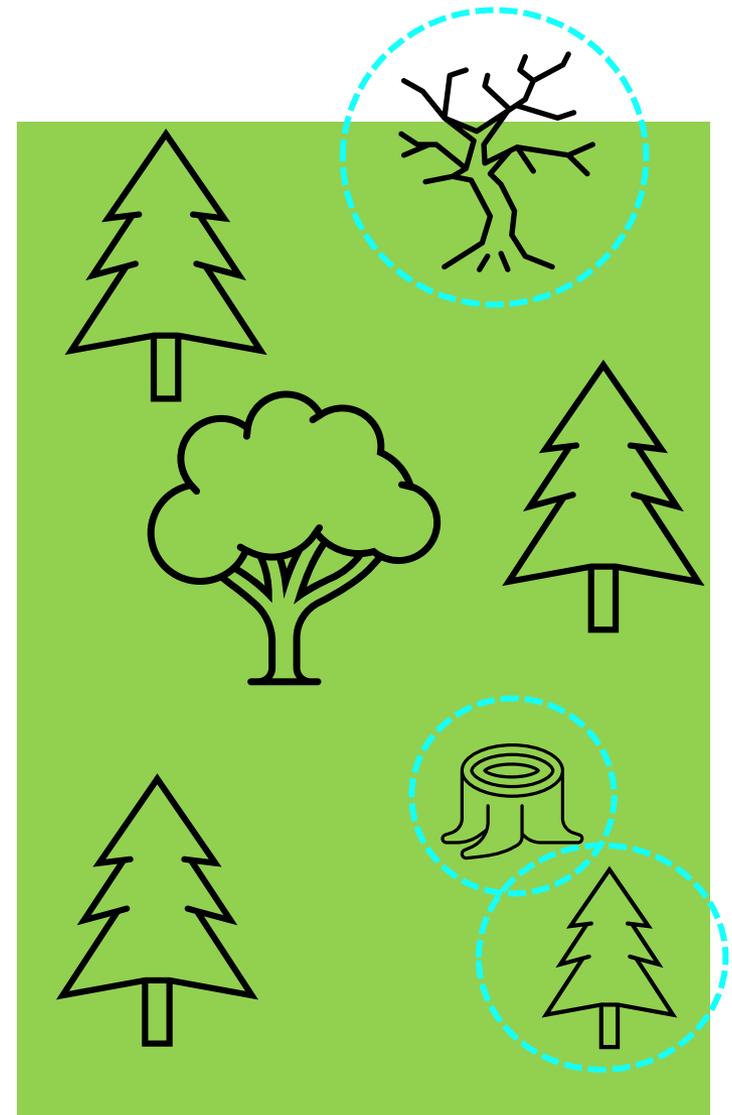- *Evaluate Removal Limits*

- *Evaluate Replacement Requirements*

With Development Proposal

Tree Retention

- Only applies when significant trees exist
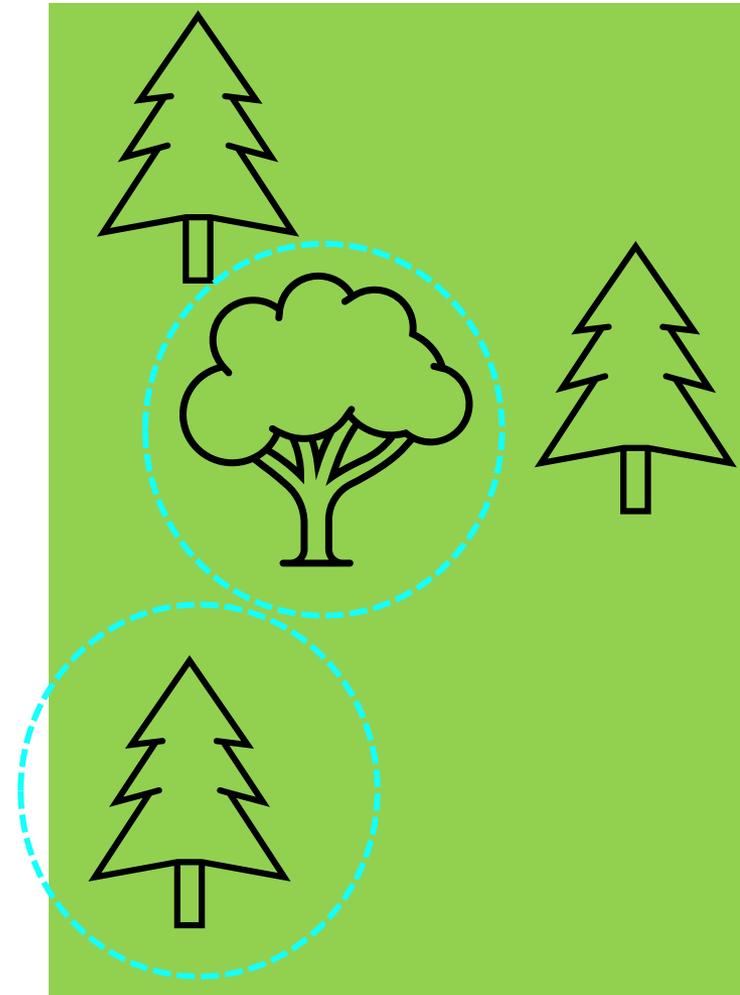
Opportunities

- *Counting recent removals*

With Development Proposal

Tree Retention

- Retain 30% total diameter inches

- Replacement only required in limited cases

Opportunities

- *Evaluate establishing minimum*

- *Improve selection criteria*

With Development Proposal

Tree Retention

- Tree protection techniques required during construction

- Retention duration undefined

Opportunities

- *Clarify duration of retention*

- *Codify key protections*

Tracking and Enforcement

- Limited data to track removal & retention

- Complaint-driven

- Many unaware of requirements

- Work toward voluntary compliance

Opportunities

- *Improve tracking systems*

- *Assess current enforcement mechanisms*

Process

**Phase 1:
Listening,
Fundamentals**

- Focus on education
- Input on priorities
- Confirm Code Approach, key definitions

- *Check in:*
  - PC Study Session 1
  - Council Study Session 1

**Phase 2:
Reviewing &
Refining**

- Reporting back
- Input on code proposals
- Draft provisions for retention, removal, replacement, protection

- *Review Proposal:*
  - PC Study Sessions 2 & 3

**Phase 3:
Action**

- PC Public Hearing & Action
- Council Study Session & Action

Public Engagement

Stakeholders

- Environmental Advocacy Groups

- Residents, including renters, multifamily residents

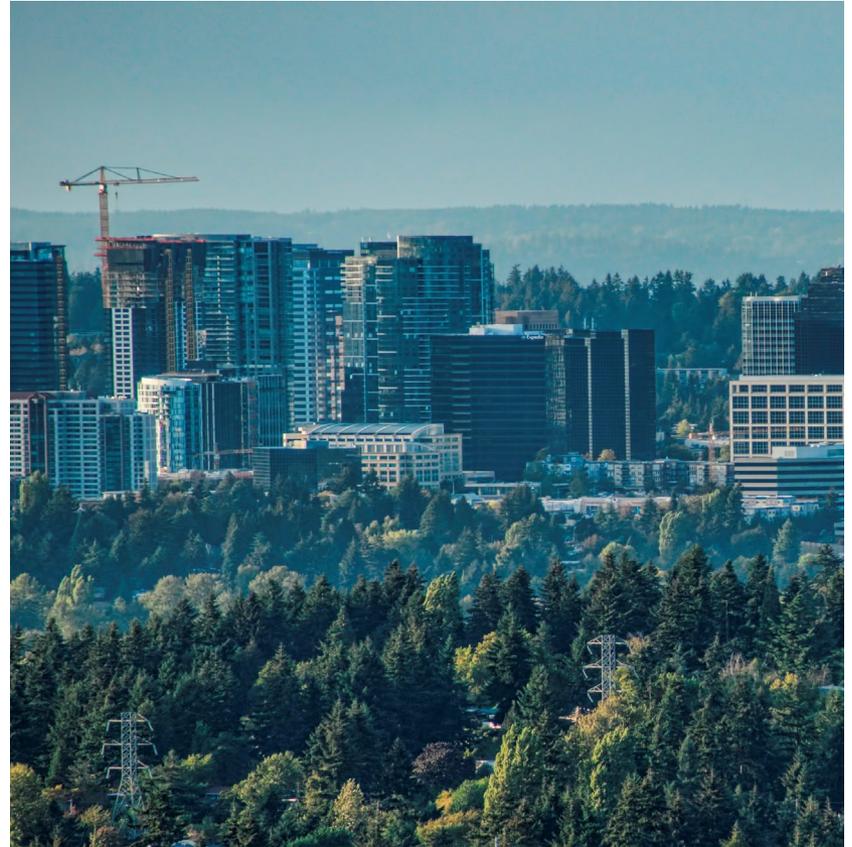- Developers

- Internal: Parks, Transportation

Other Inputs

- Neighbor cities

Council Direction

Project Guidance

- Value of improving clarity

- Need to understand housing impacts

- Draw on internal resources

- Importance of broad stakeholder engagement

Council Direction

Tree Provisions

- Incorporate considerations for different species

- Interest in counting recent tree removals with retention decision

- Understand different perspectives between neighborhoods

Council Direction

Implementation

- Explore encouraging tree protection outside development

- Analyze tree canopy more frequently
    - Plan to update every two years

Summary of Issues

- Evaluating **definition** of significant and landmark trees
- Evaluating **limits on tree removal**
- **Clarifying retention** requirements
- Improving **tracking systems** for tree removal and retention
- Evaluating **expanding replacement** requirements
- Assessing **enforcement mechanisms**
- **Avoiding barriers** to housing production