



DATE: June 6, 2022

TO: City Councilmembers

FROM: Lynne Robinson  
Mayor

SUBJECT: Interim Landmark Tree Regulations Proposal

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Under “Council Business”, I will share a proposal for interim Landmark Tree regulations. I am asking Council to direct staff to prepare an ordinance establishing regulations for “Landmark Trees” for an interim period.

## **Background**

In recent years, community members have shared concerns regarding the City of Bellevue’s code provisions related to trees, including their lack of specific protections for very large trees. The City Council has prioritized this issue and has directed staff to begin work on a comprehensive update of the City’s tree code provisions beginning in the third quarter of 2022.

Currently, Bellevue has limited residential code provisions regulating retention and removal of “significant trees”, defined as any healthy evergreen or deciduous tree eight inches in diameter or greater. In most Bellevue neighborhoods, a Clearing and Grading Permit is required to remove more than five significant trees within any three-year period, but the removal of five or fewer significant trees is exempt from permits. However, in the R1 Land Use District in the Bridle Trails Subarea, any significant tree removal requires approval of a clearing and grading permit.

Several neighboring jurisdictions have specific regulations for “Landmark Trees”, typically defined as those with a diameter of at least 24-30 inches. Creating a process to regulate the removal of landmark trees would ensure that Bellevue is consistent with many of our neighboring cities, would provide safety measures that do not exist today, and make permitting requirements more uniform throughout Bellevue neighborhoods. The proposed requirement for a permit to remove landmark trees will provide a forum for education by staff when a citizen wants to remove one of the landmark trees which contribute to our neighborhood character and citywide tree canopy goals, while ensuring that Landmark Trees are removed by a professional contractor.

**Proposal**

The proposed interim regulations would amend the Clearing and Grading Code, Chapter 23.76 of the Bellevue City Code to establish regulations for Landmark Trees. The ordinance would define Landmark Trees as trees with a diameter of 24" or more and require a Clearing and Grading Permit to remove any Landmark Tree. Removal would only be allowed by a licensed contractor ensuring workplace safety during removal. The ordinance would be replaced by permanent regulations in 2023 when the full City's tree code update is completed.

The proposal is narrow in scope and can be adopted as an early win to advance the City's tree canopy goals without delaying the Tree Canopy Preservation code amendments.

**Motion Language:**

**I move to direct staff to prepare an ordinance establishing regulations and permit requirements for "Landmark Trees" for an interim period.**