



MEDINA, WASHINGTON

AGENDA BILL

Monday, September 8, 2025

Subject: Tree Canopy Assessment

Category: Study Session Discussion

Staff Contact(s): Steven Wilcox, Development Services Director

Summary

Our consultant Facet will be presenting their 2025 Medina Urban Tree Canopy Assessment at the Monday September 8, 2025 Study Session. Staff members from Facet will attend in-person and on-line to present and discuss with you the July 16, 2025 Urban Tree Canopy Assessment as a direct comparison to the August 2014 Tree Canopy Assessment.

A PowerPoint to be used by Facet is not ready as of the Council packet issuance and will be sent to you supplemental prior to Monday. The PowerPoint will assist you with preparing questions for Facet.

As a part of the 2014 Tree Management Code amendments, Medina contracted with The Watershed Company of Kirkland to conduct a Tree Canopy Assessment. The August 2014 Watershed Company assessment established a baseline of the overall tree canopy throughout Medina. In 2023 The Watershed Company was purchased by Facet. Some of the same Watershed staff who created the 2014 version of the Tree Canopy Assessment assisted in producing the 2025 Urban Tree Canopy Assessment for Medina, although technology has evolved.

The 2014 Tree Canopy Assessment was associated with a two-phased Tree Management Code update with Phase 1 adopted under Ordinance 909 on July 9, 2014, and Phase 2 adopted under Ordinance 923 on July 13, 2015. Through 2025 budget approval, Facet was contracted to perform a new tree canopy assessment that can be directly compared to the 2014 assessment.

The Council may wish to consider actions based upon the results of the information presented. The new 2025 Urban Tree Canopy Assessment produced by Facet is a part of a data collection program being performed in 2025 and 2026. This new canopy assessment combined with the results of the on-going 2025-2026 city tree inventory will allow for informed and active maintenance of our urban forest. Council is being asked under the 2026 budget to fund the remainder of the current city tree inventory project. The 2025 tree inventory involves parks and other city open spaces and is about half the total project. The proposed 2026 tree inventory will be for right-of-way trees adjacent to roads and will complete the project. We do not have an inventory of private trees however both the tree canopy studies account for all trees in Medina.

The intent of the 2025 Urban Tree Canopy Assessment:

- Provide a direct comparison of two equivalent city-wide tree canopy studies.

- Evaluate tree canopy changes considering the 2014 and 2015 Tree Management Code amendments.
- Provide a data baseline which can be used by future Councils for evaluating tree canopy changes.
- Allow the Council to decide on potential action to be taken based on the new information.

The 2014 baseline Tree Canopy Assessment vs. the new 2025 Urban Tree Canopy Assessment will give us insight into the performance of the Tree Management Code amendments made under Ordinances 909 and 923. The Council will have the opportunity to consider potential changes to the Medina Tree Management Code using accurate data.

The August 2014 Tree Canopy Assessment is provided as Exhibit 1. The new July 16, 2025 Urban Tree Canopy Assessment is provided to you as Exhibit 2.

Action

The new Urban Tree Canopy Assessment should be considered when there are proposed amendments to the Medina Tree Management Code. Essentially, evaluation will be needed to determine whether a new code amendment proposal achieves Council policy (Comprehensive Plan) regarding the Tree Management Code or not.

Potential Direction

Council approved developing data that is needed to make accurate decisions regarding our Tree Management Code. Council may wish to direct staff towards action with consideration of the September 8, 2025 Facet presentation.

1. Council direction may include having staff return to present a plan for improvements to the existing Medina Tree Management Code. Council has given previous directions and there are additional administrative changes that could improve the use of existing Tree Management Code.

Any amendments outside of a comprehensive review of the Tree Management Code should not only consider our Comprehensive Plan, but also consider the 2025 Urban Tree Canopy Assessment we are now receiving from Facet.

2. Council may wish to consider the transformation of our existing Tree Management Code. The concept of “Urban Forestry” may be a direction that Council would like to pursue. This would require a comprehensive review of our Tree Management Code. Council may wish to have a presentation scheduled to learn about urban forestry vs. tree management.

We should clarify our policy before amending our Tree Management Code.

I have anticipated returning to Council after completion of the tree inventory project in 2026 with a proposal for possible comprehensive action on the Medina Tree Management Code as a 2027 budget item. This would come to Council for consideration in the summer of 2026.

3. Council may wish to have additional information regarding current private tree enforcement. Council may wish to consider potential policy changes based upon our current private tree enforcement methods. Our existing approach to enforcement through code and administrative action may not be fully understood by observers and should be at least clarified.

Private tree permitting often requires that supplemental trees be planted. This is an enforcement problem for staff that should be discussed and resolved.

The effectiveness of our Tree Management Code regarding private tree permitting and enforcement should be addressed. There are concerns by those wishing to preserve trees vs. those who want private property rights protected. This topic may be better addressed as part of a 2027 comprehensive review of our Tree Management Code.

Amendments to our Tree Management Code will require review by the Planning Commission. Council can assign tasks to the Planning Commission for the Development Services Director to add to their annual calendar. Planning Commission will evaluate the Council directions and return recommendations. State agencies may also be involved in reviewing proposed code amendments.

Generally, the Development Services Department enforces the Tree Management Code but has had limited input regarding public tree management. An urban forestry management approach to Medina trees would likely require consolidation of tree management.

Council Priorities:

The 2025 Urban Tree Canopy Assessment document meets and supports Council's priorities 1 through 5.

1. Financial Stability and Accountability
2. Quality Infrastructure
3. Efficient and Effective Government
4. Public Safety and Health
5. Neighborhood Character and Community Building

Attachment(s)

Exhibit 1. August 2014 Tree Canopy Assessment

Exhibit 2. July 2025 Urban Tree Canopy Assessment

Budget/Fiscal Impact:

The 2025 Urban Tree Canopy Assessment was completed under budget approved by the Council.

Recommendation:

Discussion item. Council may wish to make a motion to direct staff using the items listed under "Potential Direction" as a guide, or otherwise.

City Manager Approval: N/A

Proposed Council Motion: N/A

Time Estimate: 50 minutes