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**Date:** February 23, 2026  
**To:** Honorable Mayor and City Council  
**Via:** Jeff Swanson, City Manager  
**From:** Steven R. Wilcox, Development Services Department Director  
**Subject:** Development Services Department Report - Tree Management Code Amendments

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### Summary

This report follows a presentation to the Council on January 23, 2023, by two arborists under professional services contracts with the City of Medina. The meeting included a proposal for Council to direct staff to take two actions:

1. Prepare code amendments based upon six bullet points titles "Short-term Solutions" as outlined by one of our arborists.
2. Prepare a plan which considers comprehensive review of the Tree Management Code.

Neither of the two actions were completed. On February 6, 2026, at the regular Council meeting, I was directed to complete the first action by bringing a draft ordinance to the Council for consideration of adoption.

### Amendments

One of our arborists presented a PowerPoint where he provided his observations from using Medina Municipal Code Chapter 16.52 – Tree Management Code for a few months in 2022. The PowerPoint was summarized as six bullet points into Recommended Adjustments: Short -term Solutions:

- *Remove – "Supplemental trees in excess of those needed to meet the minimum required tree units shall not be required."*

#### Comments:

This refers to MMC 16.52.090.D.3.(d) addressing land under development and one of the factors listed to determine the quantity of supplemental trees required to replace those removed. The arborist commented that this code section "*allows for a substantial number of trees to be removed.*"

Removal of MMC 16.52.090.D.3.(d) will not cause developers to voluntarily increase the number of supplemental trees they plant. Without changing the method of calculating tree units or otherwise changing the supplemental tree quantity calculation process in its entirety, this code amendment will not increase quantity of trees in Medina or increase tree canopy.

- *Require species that can attain a similar canopy size to trees being removed.*

Comments:

This would be a change to Medina's "Lists of Suitable Trees". As part of the 1/23/23 presentation specific amendments to the Lists of Suitable Trees were not presented as options.

This change is logical and over time when combined with a management plan, could result in canopy increase. This is common with other jurisdictions.

Amendments to the Lists of Suitable Trees will require use of our City Arborist.

- *Expand "List of Suitable Trees" to allow select deciduous non-native species.*

Comments:

Washington native deciduous trees are not good options for urban settings. A limited list of non-native species is logical and common with other jurisdictions.

These amendments will require use of our City Arborist.

- *Tree preservation plan shall include a report by a qualified professional that identifies compliance with code objectives.*

Comments:

With exception of trees found by our City Arborist to be hazardous and in need of removal, it is our practice to require applicants to provide a report by a Certified Arborist for our review as part of tree removal permit applications.

- *Increase minimum replacement trees to account for attrition.*

Comments:

This can be accomplished through an increase of the minimum tree credit number. Increasing the tree credits required will result in more supplemental trees being planted and that more of those trees will likely survive to maturity.

- *Legacy and landmark trees: Remove "the risk of the tree declining or becoming a nuisance is unenhanced by any proposed development."*

Comments:

This is MMC 16.52.080. A.1.c.ii. which allows for a tree to not be designated as a Legacy or Landmark tree if development will damage the tree for a period of ten years.

This should be removed as recommended. Confusing, difficult to apply, and can result in Legacy or Landmark tree removal.

### Conclusion

There were two actions as part of the January 23, 2023, presentation by our arborists. The first action to address the Tree Management Code involves the six bullet point amendments. The second part was the preparation of a plan which comprehensively reviews the Tree Management Code.

The process that took us to the January 23, 2023, Council presentation began in early 2022 when our City Arborist consultant who had been with us for 15-years left his employer for work with King County. We then hired two consultant arborists due to the specialties and abilities each had at the time. After the two new

consultants had gained experience using our Tree Management Code, I asked for their opinions considering Medina's Comprehensive Plan, the Purpose and Intent of the code, and the effectiveness of the code to regulate tree removal and protection. Our Planning Manager and the two arborist consultants worked together and evaluated the entirety of MMC Chapter 16.52 and provided several insights and opinions. The consensus was that the Tree Management Code would require a significant number of complex amendments. My conclusion was that to amend Medina's Tree Management Code to the extent recommended, a complete review of the document was needed rather than a selective approach.

The Council meeting was scheduled for the January 23, 2023, with the action item recommended by our arborist to address six bullet points. I added the second action item which I have since been building towards through budgeted data collection and regular Council updates. After the meeting I immediately regretted having only six bullet random points presented to the Council as a partial solution to a much larger problem.

Some of the points in the six bullets will have positive impacts, but none reflect concerns about development project tree removals that the Council regularly expresses to me.

The City of Medina needs a new approach to private and public tree regulations through a completely new code.

#### Attachments

PowerPoint "Tree Management Code" by Sean Dugan and Andy Crossett  
Medina Lists of Suitable Trees