

## Chapter 12.32 - HERITAGE TREES

### 12.32.010 - Purpose.

- A. The purpose of this chapter is to recognize, foster appreciation and provide for voluntary protection of certain trees, because their age, species, natural resource value, ecological or horticultural value, or historical association, are of special importance to the city. These trees may grow on private or public property.
- B. In particular, the following trees are considered significant, and therefore will be eligible for heritage tree nomination in Oregon City, if they meet the minimum size requirements of the table below:

Tree Eligibility Based on Size

Common Name	Species	Size (d.b.h)*
Oregon White Oak	<i>Quercus garryana</i>	8"
Douglas Fir	<i>Pseudotsuga menziesii</i>	18"
Western Red Cedar	<i>Thuja plicata</i>	12"
Ponderosa Pine	<i>Pinus ponderosa</i>	12"
Western Yew	<i>Taxus brevifolia</i>	6"
Pacific Dogwood	<i>Cornus nuttallii</i>	5"
Pacific Madrone	<i>Arbutus menziesii</i>	5"
Other broadleaf tree species		20"
Other conifer trees		20"

\*d.b.h = Diameter at breast height, means a measurement of the trunk or stem diameter of a mature tree at a height four and one-half feet above the ground level at the base of the tree.

### 12.32.020 - Definitions.

For the purposes of this chapter the following definitions are used.

"Hazardous tree" means a tree that presents a significant risk to life or property as determined by a certified arborist, forester, or horticulturalist. An otherwise healthy tree that may become a hazard to a proposed future development shall not be considered a hazardous tree. Hazardous trees may include, but are not limited to dead, diseased, broken, split, cracked, leaning, and uprooted trees. A tree harboring communicable diseases or insects of a type that could infest and cause the decline of adjacent or nearby trees may also be identified as a hazardous tree.

"Diseased tree" means a tree that has a naturally occurring disease that is expected to kill the tree, or which harbors communicable diseases or insects of a type that could infest and cause the decline of adjacent or nearby trees as determined by a certified arborist, forester or horticulturist.

"Heritage stand" means a group of two or more trees that have been designated by the city as having unique importance, subject to the heritage tree regulations of [OCMC 12.32](#).

"Heritage tree" means a tree that has been designated by the city as having unique importance, and subject to the heritage tree regulations of [OCMC 12.32](#). Where a grouping of two or more heritage trees has been so designated, the term "heritage stand" may be used.

"Imminent hazard tree" means a hazardous tree — all or more than thirty percent of which has already fallen or is estimated to fall within seventy-two hours into the public right-of-way or onto a target that cannot be protected, restricted, moved, or removed. (See also Tree, hazard.) Determination of imminent hazard may be made by the City of Oregon City public works or emergency personnel, a PGE forester, or a certified arborist.

"Native tree" or "native tree stand" refers to a regulated native tree or stand of trees that are defined as such on regionally recognized plant lists. Significant native trees are those that contribute to the landscape character of the area.

"Tree stand" means a stand of three or more trees which together create a mutual canopy continuous over eighty or more percent of the area within the boundaries of the stand.

#### **12.32.030 - Nomination and Review Process.**

All nominations require approval of the City Commission.

- A. A tree or stand of trees may be nominated for consideration as a heritage tree or heritage stand by any citizen. The tree or stand of trees may be located anywhere in the city, regardless of whether the property is public or private, or if it is within a right-of-way.
- B. Completed heritage tree nominations shall be submitted by December 31, and nominations announced prior to or concurrent with the proclamation of Arbor Day.
- C. The Community Development Director shall schedule all nominations for review by the Natural Resources Committee at a regularly scheduled meeting, with notice to the general public, applicant, consenting property owner, abutting property owner, Parks and Recreation Advisory Committee, and the chair of any recognized neighborhood association in which the tree or stand is located as applicable.
- D. The Community Development Director shall prepare a staff report that analyzes the nomination pursuant to the criteria in this chapter and shall include a staff recommendation to support or not support the nomination.
- E. The Natural Resources Committee shall review the nomination and staff report at a regular meeting and make a recommendation regarding the nomination to the City Commission. In the absence of a functioning Natural Resources Committee then the Community Development Director shall forward the nomination directly to the City Commission.
- F. The City Commission shall make the final decision on all nominations forwarded to them by the Natural Resources Committee at a public meeting.
- G. Notice of the City Commission meeting shall be provided to the general public, the nominating applicant, Natural Resources Committee, the property owner or abutting

property owner (if located on city right-of-way), the chair of any recognized neighborhood association in which the tree or stand is located, and the Parks and Recreation Advisory Committee, if applicable.

- H. After considering the recommendation and any testimony by interested persons or groups, the City Commission shall vote to approve or deny the nomination.
- I. Notice of the City Commission's decision shall be provided to the NRC, property owner, abutting property owner, and the Parks and Recreation Advisory Committee as applicable.

**12.32.040 - Consent of Owner.**

Consent of the property owner or jurisdiction responsible for maintenance of the tree proposed for designation shall be required, pursuant to the following provisions.

- A. Nominations for trees or tree stands on city-owned property, other than right-of-way, may be submitted by any citizen of Oregon City and the City Commission shall make the final decision following the general procedure identified in subsection 12.32.030 above. If the nomination is for a city park, the Parks and Recreation Advisory Committee shall also review the nomination and provide an advisory opinion prior to the Natural Resources Committee recommendation to the City Commission.
- B. Nominations for trees or tree stands located in city public rights-of-way, including alleys, require the consent of the abutting property owner responsible for the care and maintenance of the nominated tree pursuant to OCMC 12.08.
- C. Nominations for trees or tree stands on property owned by other public agencies that are not the City (for example, Clackamas County, the Oregon Department of Transportation, Urban Renewal Agency), shall require the written consent of the applicable public agency before the nomination is considered by the city.
- D. Nominations for trees or tree stands located on private property may only be submitted by the property owner or if accompanied by the property owner's written consent.

**12.32.050 - Nomination Submittal Requirements.**

- A. Trees and stands of trees shall be nominated by completing a form provided by the Community Development Director and attaching the required information.
- B. For individual trees, the applicant shall provide, at a minimum, the approximate height, canopy spread, diameter, approximate age, species, and condition of the tree, if known. For a stand of trees, the nomination shall be accompanied by sufficient information to describe the overall condition of the stand.
- C. The nomination shall include a narrative explaining how the tree or stand of trees meets the review criteria identified in [Section 12.32.050](#) of this chapter.
- D. The nomination shall be accompanied by the written consent of the property owner or agency as described in [Section 12.32.030\(B\)](#) of this chapter.
- E. The Community Development Director may request further information from the applicant to support the nomination request.

**12.32.060 - Designation.**

Following approval by the City Commission, the designation shall be completed pursuant to the following procedures:

- A. For private property, the designation shall be complete upon the property owner's execution of a restrictive covenant running with the land for the benefit of the city and suitable for recordation by the city. The covenant shall describe the subject property, generally describe the location of the heritage tree or stand of trees, and covenant that the

tree or stand of trees is protected as a "heritage tree" or "heritage stand" by the city of Oregon City and therefore subject to special protection as provided in this chapter.

- B. If the tree or stand of trees is located on city right-of-way, the designation shall be complete upon the staff's listing of the tree or stand of trees on the city of Oregon City heritage tree and stand records and official maps. The city shall condition any future property owner-requested vacation of the public right-of-way upon the execution of a protective covenant in accordance with subsection 1., above, which shall be recorded by the city upon the vacation of the right-of-way.
- C. For designation of heritage trees and stands on city parks and other city owned property, the designation shall be complete upon the City Commission's approval of the nomination and any documents determined by the commission to be legally necessary to ensure the preservation of the heritage tree or stand of trees, whether this be in the form of a restrictive covenant, or other instrument or agreement applicable to the specific site.
- D. For designation of heritage trees and stands on public property or right-of-way other than city property or right-of-way, the designation shall be complete upon the City Commission's approval of the nomination and any documents determined by the commission to be legally necessary to ensure the preservation of the heritage tree or stand of trees, whether this be in the form of a restrictive covenant, or other instrument or agreement applicable to the specific site.

**12.32.070 - Criteria for designation.**

The City Commission may designate a tree or stand of trees as a heritage tree or heritage stand if the commission determines that the tree or stand of trees is consistent with a positive balance of the factors set forth below.

- A. Heritage criteria (at least one heritage criterion must be met):
  - 1. The tree or stand of trees is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad pattern of Oregon City's history; or
  - 2. The tree or stand of trees is associated with the life of a person or group of historic significance to Oregon City; or
  - 3. The tree or stand of trees represents a significant and distinguishable presence within Oregon City; or
  - 4. The tree or stand of trees has age, size, or species significance (horticultural or ecological), which contributes to Oregon City's heritage status;
- B. Site and Condition Criteria (all criteria must be satisfied):
  - 1. The tree species is not listed as invasive on any regionally accepted plant list;
  - 2. If the proposed heritage tree or stand is located on private property or on public property owned by a public agency other than the city of Oregon City, the property owner or, if the tree or stand of trees is located on a public right-of-way, the abutting private property owner consents to the designation and agrees to sign a protective covenant.

**12.32.080 - Protection of heritage trees and stands.**

- A. No heritage tree or stand may be removed, topped, or otherwise altered unless permitted by this section.
- B. An application to remove a heritage tree or stand shall demonstrate that the burden imposed on the property owner, or, if the tree is located within the public right-of-way

under city jurisdiction, then the burden imposed on the city by the continued presence of the tree, outweighs the public benefit provided by the tree. For the purposes of making this determination, the following tree impacts shall not be considered unreasonable burdens on the property owner, or if appropriate, the city:

1. View obstruction;
  2. Routine pruning, leaf raking and other maintenance activities; and
  3. Infrastructure impacts or tree hazards that can be controlled or avoided by appropriate pruning or maintenance.
- C. Replacement. If the heritage tree is permitted to be removed due to poor health or hazard as determined by the city, the applicant shall be required to mitigate for the loss of the tree pursuant to the following priorities:
1. Replanting on site.  
Replacement trees shall measure a minimum of 2" caliper. Priority shall be to plant larger caliper trees if practicable provided that the equivalent number of overall caliper inches is planted. For example:  
 18" of replacement trees required =  
 Priority 1) Four (4) x 4" caliper trees, + one 2" caliper tree.  
 Priority 2) Six (6) x 3" caliper trees.  
 Priority 3) Nine (9) x 2" caliper trees.

Table 12.32.080 - Heritage Tree Replacement Requirements

Size of tree removed (DBH)	Number of 2" trees to be planted / total caliper inches required
6 to 12"	3 (6")
13 to 18"	6 (12")
19 to 24"	9 (18")
25 to 30"	12 (24")
31 and over"	15 (30")

2. Replanting off-site. If site constraints do not permit the planting of all mitigation trees on-site, alternative off-site planting areas may be considered and approved by the Community Development Director.
- D. The removal of or damage to a heritage tree or stand in violation of this chapter shall constitute a civil infraction, subject to the code enforcement procedures of Chapter 1.16 and/or Chapter 1.20, except that the penalty for unlawful removal of a heritage tree shall be six hundred dollars for each tree removed or damaged.
- E. Native heritage trees that are removed shall be replaced with native tree species.
- F. Applications to remove city-owned trees from the public right-of-way that are eligible for heritage tree nomination shall be reviewed pursuant to the procedures and notification process in OCMC 17.41.045.

**12.32.090 - Recognition of heritage trees and stands.**

- A. A heritage tree plaque may be designed and furnished by the city to the property owner or, if the tree is in the public right-of-way, to the appropriate city official, of a designated

heritage tree or stand. The city may charge a fee to cover the costs of the providing the plaque. The plaque shall be posted at a location at or near the heritage tree or stand and, if feasible, visible from a public right-of-way.

- B. The Community Development Director shall maintain a list and map of designated heritage trees and stands.

**12.32.100 - Removal of heritage tree or stand designation.**

A designated heritage tree or stand may have that designation removed if the tree or stand dies or is removed pursuant to this chapter. The Natural Resources Committee, Parks and Recreation Advisory Committee, and City Commission shall be notified of the pending de-designation prior to the removal as applicable. If removed from private property, the city shall record a document extinguishing the covenant.