

TO: City Council, Planning Commission, and Tree Board
FROM: Dana Bowers, Associate Planner, Sharon Lumbantobing, Deputy Community Development Director
DATE: July 28, 2026
SUBJECT: Urban Forestry Code Updates – Bus Tour

1) Recommended Action:

No action requested. This is a discussion item.

2) Background:

The City Council, Planning Commission, and Tree Board will participate in a bus tour of locations throughout Tumwater to observe existing tree and vegetation conditions, discuss implementation of the City's current tree regulations, and consider policy questions that will be addressed through the Urban Forestry Code Update. The tour is intended to provide a common understanding of how the City's existing tree regulations function in practice and to illustrate the opportunities and tradeoffs associated with future code revisions.

At each stop, participants will observe examples of issues that occur during development and redevelopment, including tree retention, replacement replanting, housing and redevelopment, public infrastructure, street trees, critical areas, public safety, and long-term urban canopy goals. The tour is intended to provide the context for the Urban Forestry Code updates.

Tumwater's current tree and vegetation protection regulations were adopted in 1989 and last substantially amended in 2002. Since that time, City Council, the Tree Board, staff, and community members have identified opportunities to improve the code by strengthening tree retention, providing clearer implementation standards, improving enforcement, and better balancing environmental, housing, infrastructure, and public safety objectives.

The City's Urban Forest Management Plan (UFMP), adopted in 2021, identifies updates to the City's urban forestry regulations as a key implementation action. In 2022, the City received grant funding from the Washington Department of Natural Resources to prepare a coordinated update to the City's Street Tree regulations (TMC 12.24), Trees and Vegetation Preservation regulations (TMC 16.08), Landscaping regulations (TMC 18.47), and a new Street Tree Plan. Public outreach and preparation of draft regulations occurred between 2022 and 2024.

The project was paused in 2023 while the City evaluated potential impacts of the State's developing Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) requirements. Although those regulations continue to evolve, the City restarted the project in 2026 to complete the Urban Forestry Code Update and ensure the regulations are consistent with the adopted 2025 Comprehensive Plan, Citywide Design Guidelines, Development Guidelines, and the City's recently adopted tree list.

Following the tour, staff will continue refining the draft code and Street Tree Plan. The updated regulations will be presented to the Planning Commission, Tree Board, and City Council through a series of public meetings before adoption. The resulting code will provide a coordinated urban forestry framework that improves implementation, supports the City's

long-term canopy goals, and balances tree preservation with housing, infrastructure, and community development objectives.

3) Policy Support:

Comprehensive Plan Conservation Element Policy C-4.1. Maximize retention of a healthy tree cover and native vegetation and encourage restoration, replacement, and enhancement of unhealthy trees and disturbed vegetation as recommended in the adopted Tumwater Urban Forestry Management Plan consistent with the Growth Management Act and the requirements of protected habitat.

Comprehensive Plan Climate Element Policy CL-12.1. Manage Tumwater's urban forest in line with the most recent Urban Forestry Management Plan and current climate projections and guidance.

Urban Forestry Management Plan Objective 4.1.D. Review tree preservation, landscaping, and street tree regulations regularly, with the intended timing to start in Spring 2023 and then every four years.

4) Alternatives:

☐ None.

5) Fiscal Notes:

☐ None.

6) Attachments:

A. Tree Tour Map and Itinerary