

Goal 5 Open Spaces, Scenic & Historic Areas & Natural Resources

□ Section 2, Vegetation

BACKGROUND

Statewide Planning Goal 5: Open Spaces, Scenic and Historic Areas, and Natural Resources

“To conserve open space and protect natural and scenic resources.”

Statewide Planning Goal 5 requires communities to provide programs that will: 1) ensure open space; 2) protect scenic and historic areas and natural resources for future generations; and 3) promote healthy and visually attractive environments in harmony with the natural landscape character. Goal 5 requires communities to inventory Goal 5 resources, including ecologically significant natural areas, of which vegetation is an important element. The inventory is required to include a description of the location, quality and quantity of these resources, and an identification of conflicting uses. Where no conflicting uses have been identified, resources must be managed so as to preserve their original character. Where conflicting uses have been identified, the economic, social, environmental and energy (ESEE)* consequences shall be determined and programs developed to achieve the goal.

Vegetation is an integral part of Lake Oswego’s environment. It is valuable for its aesthetic qualities and contribution to air and water quality, wildlife habitat, shade, and erosion control. Vegetation resources also support recreational opportunities and contribute substantially to Lake Oswego’s distinctive character.

Much of the native vegetation in Lake Oswego’s Urban Services Boundary (USB) has been displaced, first by agriculture and logging, and more recently, by urban development. Also, competition from introduced species such as English ivy, reed canary grass, and blackberries has made it difficult for native plant communities to reestablish themselves. However, many areas of environmentally significant vegetation still remain within the USB. These natural resource sites include vegetation in and around Oswego Lake, the Willamette River, wetlands, stream corridors and native tree groves. In addition, Lake Oswego has many outstanding non-native trees and ornamental plant materials.

Some of Lake Oswego’s vegetation resources have been inventoried by two studies: the 1975 Lake Oswego Physical Resources Inventory (LOPRI), and the Lake Oswego Natural Resources Inventory, completed in 1992. The 1992 study described and evaluated tree groves, and the natural values and functions of vegetation within wetlands and stream corridors as follows:

- Tree Groves: Tree groves within Lake Oswego’s Urban Services Boundary include coniferous, and mixed deciduous/coniferous stands of trees. The area’s remaining forested areas and tree groves are located mostly on steep hillsides, dry rocky bluffs, in or near wetlands and along

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streams. Tree groves are valuable wildlife habitat, recreation and aesthetic resources. In addition, forested areas improve air quality, provide wildlife habitat, shade and stabilize steep slopes.

- Wetlands: The Lake Oswego area has both emergent wetlands, where grasses are the dominant plant community, and forested wetlands, which are dominated by trees and woody vegetation. Vegetation is essential for wetlands to perform the important natural functions of storm water storage, improvement of water quality, erosion control, ground water recharge and the provision of fish and wildlife habitat.
- Stream Corridors: Stream corridors are located throughout the Lake Oswego Area. Vegetation within stream corridors lessens downstream flooding and benefits water quality by slowing runoff and preventing erosion. Also, stream corridors provide vegetated corridors necessary for wildlife habitat and travel.

The Lake Oswego Tree Cutting Ordinance (LOC 55) regulates the removal of trees. In addition, the City's land use regulations also provide some protection for individual trees and tree groves and vegetation within stream corridors, wetlands, floodplains, hillsides and the Willamette Greenway. Further, conditions of approval can be applied through the development review process to preserve significant vegetation. Lake Oswego's regulations also require the preservation of certain rare plant species.

Landscaping and tree plantings on private and public property enhance the aesthetic character of Lake Oswego and also provide other benefits such as shade, wildlife habitat and buffering and screening among different types of land uses. Landscaping is required by the City's development standards for all major development. Also, the City's erosion control and hillside protection standards require the use of vegetation as a means to control soil erosion.

Summary of Major Issues

The following are some of the issues, changed circumstances and conditions which were considered in the update of this element of the Comprehensive Plan.

- The 1975 Lake Oswego Physical Resources Inventory (LOPRI) was updated in 1992 by the Lake Oswego Natural Resources Inventory.
- There has been an overall loss of native vegetation in Lake Oswego since the 1975 LOPRI.
- Lake Oswego's development regulations provide for varying levels of protection for vegetation. Landscaping is required to be installed as part of all major development.

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GOALS, POLICIES AND RECOMMENDED ACTION MEASURES

GOAL

The City shall protect and restore the community's wooded character and vegetation resources.

POLICIES

1. Protect, restore and maintain existing vegetation which has environmental, wildlife habitat and aesthetic qualities, including tree groves and forested hillsides and vegetation associated with wetlands, stream corridors and riparian areas.
2. Protect, restore and maintain native plant communities, including identified threatened plant species.
3. Require developers to maximize the preservation of trees and to maintain and enhance the cohesive quality of tree groves through:
 - a. Site design and construction methods; and,
 - b. Open space dedication of areas which contain these resources.
4. Require the protection of significant or historic individual trees pursuant to a heritage tree protection program.
5. Ensure vegetation is maintained, protected and restored through:
 - a. Regulation of tree removal;
 - b. Conditions of development approval;
 - c. Monitoring of development to ensure compliance with the City's regulations and conditions of development approval; and,
 - d. Enforcement of regulations.
6. Require landscaping for all development other than individual single family dwellings and duplexes to:
 - a. Visually enhance development projects;

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- b. Provide buffering and screening between differing land uses;
 - c. Reduce surface water runoff, improve water quality and maintain soil stability;
 - d. Provide wildlife habitat; and,
 - e. Reduce energy use by using vegetation for shade and windbreaks.
7. Require the establishment and maintenance of landscaped areas in all new parking lots and expansion of existing lots, to provide shade and visual amenity. Parking lot landscaping shall emphasize:
 - a. The planting of broad spreading trees for shade and to mitigate the negative visual and environmental impacts of parking lots; and,
 - b. Effective screening and buffering between parking lots and adjacent uses.
 8. Require tree planting for all development other than individual single family homes and duplexes, unless landscape standards are met by existing vegetation. When required, trees shall be planted along the street and throughout the development site.
 9. Allow innovative site and building design including the clustering of buildings to preserve trees and other vegetation.
 10. Ensure the continued maintenance of vegetation required pursuant to development approval, within landscaped and common areas.
 11. Design and construct public works projects to preserve existing vegetation to the extent practical.
 12. Protect and enhance vegetation resources within rights-of-way and other public lands through measures such as:
 - a. Regulations to protect public trees;
 - b. The provision of adequate right-of-way to ensure sufficient space for tree planting; and,
 - c. An ongoing planting and maintenance program for trees and other vegetation in public rights-of-way, open spaces and parks.
 13. Preserve natural resource sites, through public acquisition and other methods such as conservation easements, to permanently limit development.
 14. The City shall emphasize protection rather than mitigation of the functions and values of vegetation.

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RECOMMENDED ACTION MEASURES

- i. Maintain a database of overall tree cover, threatened plant species, tree groves and significant individual trees within Lake Oswego's Urban Services Boundary.
- ii. Support neighborhood and community efforts to reestablish native plant communities, especially on hillsides, and in wetlands and stream corridors.
- iii. Provide information to the general public and developers regarding:
 - a. Tree maintenance and preservation;
 - b. Landscape design and the appropriate use of plant materials;
 - c. Protection of trees and other vegetation during construction;
 - d. Native plant materials that are low maintenance, drought tolerant and which enhance wildlife habitat; and,
 - e. The value that vegetation resources lend to both private property and the community.
- iv. Encourage Clackamas County to protect tree groves and other significant vegetation within the unincorporated portion of the USB, and to require landscaping and tree planting for all development other than individual single-family homes and duplexes within the area.
- v. Promote landscapes on public lands which are low-maintenance, drought-tolerant, require minimal chemical application and which support wildlife habitat.
- vi. Encourage neighborhood associations, schools and service clubs to participate in community improvement activities such as tree planting and natural area rehabilitation projects.
- vii. Encourage private property owners to protect and restore vegetation resources through measures such as:
 - a. Improvement and maintenance of existing landscapes, including replanting when vegetation is removed;
 - b. Tree planting on the grounds of institutions such as schools and churches; and,
 - c. A voluntary protection program, such as a "Heritage Tree Program" for significant trees.
- viii. Encourage the use of native plant materials on both public and private property.
- ix. Establish regulations which prevent the use of destructive and nuisance plant materials such as English ivy as part of required landscaping.

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