

# Affordable Housing

*Home In Tacoma – Trees AND Housing  
Priorities, Benchmarks, & Tools in the Toolbox  
July 2024*



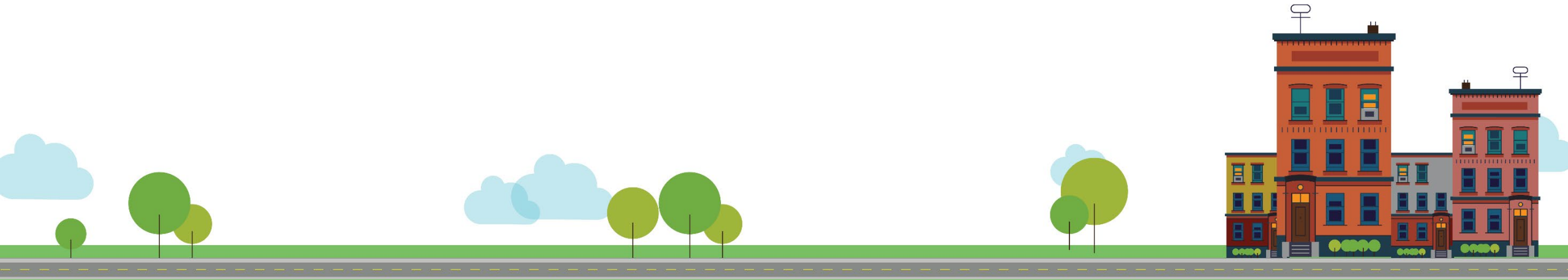
Credit: Mithūn



# Tacoma Urban Forestry Priorities

## Re-evaluate Tacoma's code to promote **Trees AND Housing**

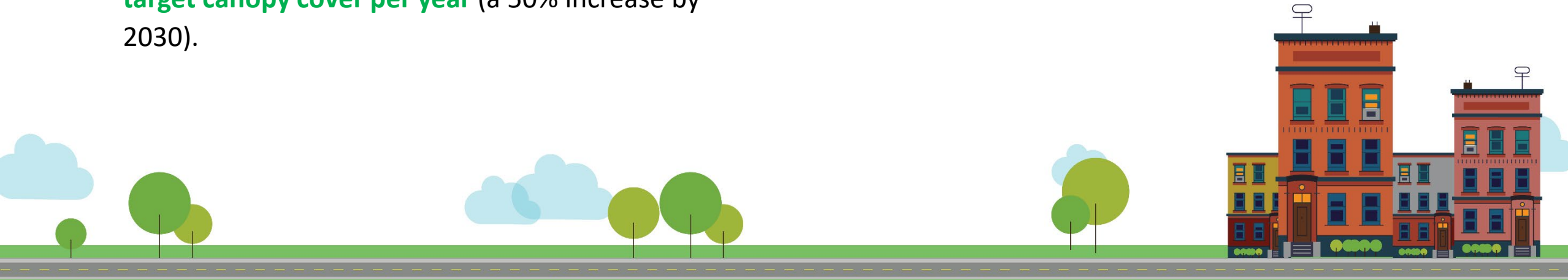
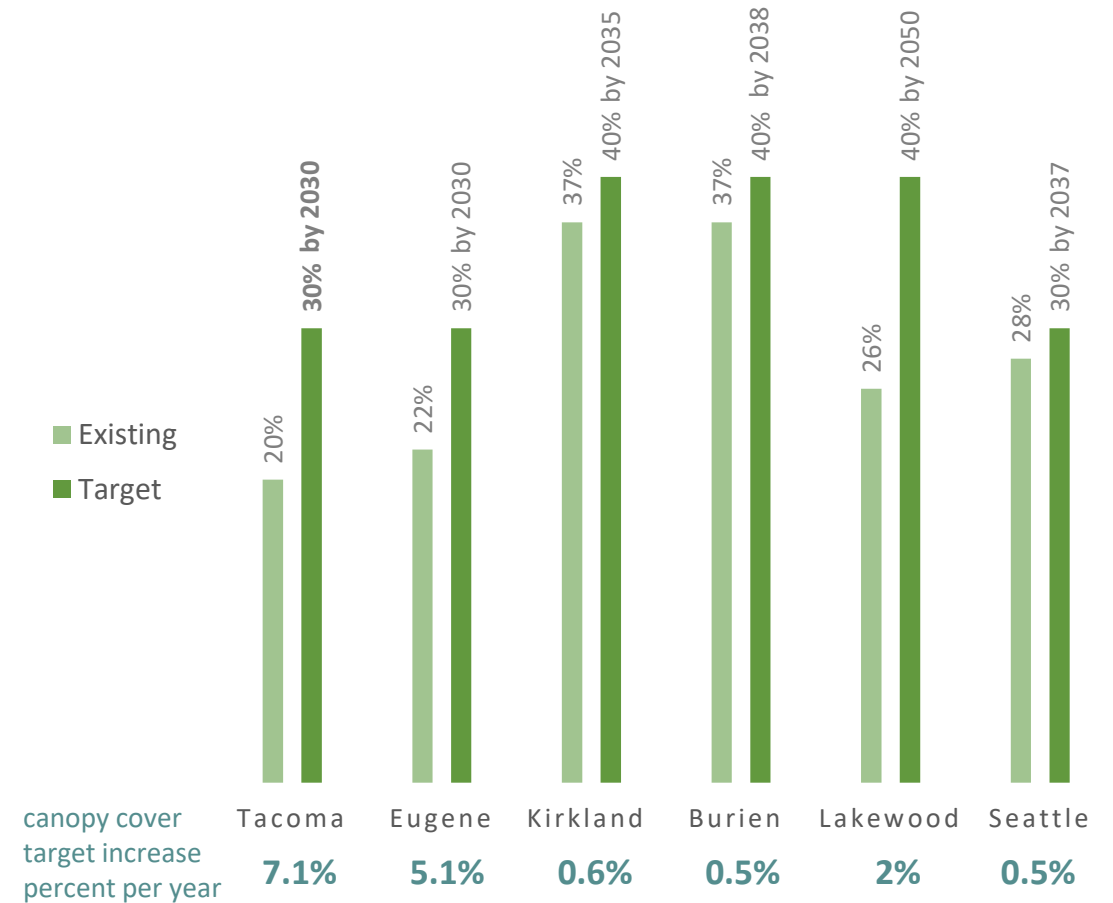
- Simplify landscaping code
- Tree credit system for development
- Tree health and preservation
- Integrate trees as stormwater BMPs
- Utilize best practices for lot coverage, impervious surface, landscaped area
- Consider long-term maintenance needs and inspections by arborists (staffing/resourcing, bonds)



# Tree Canopy Targets

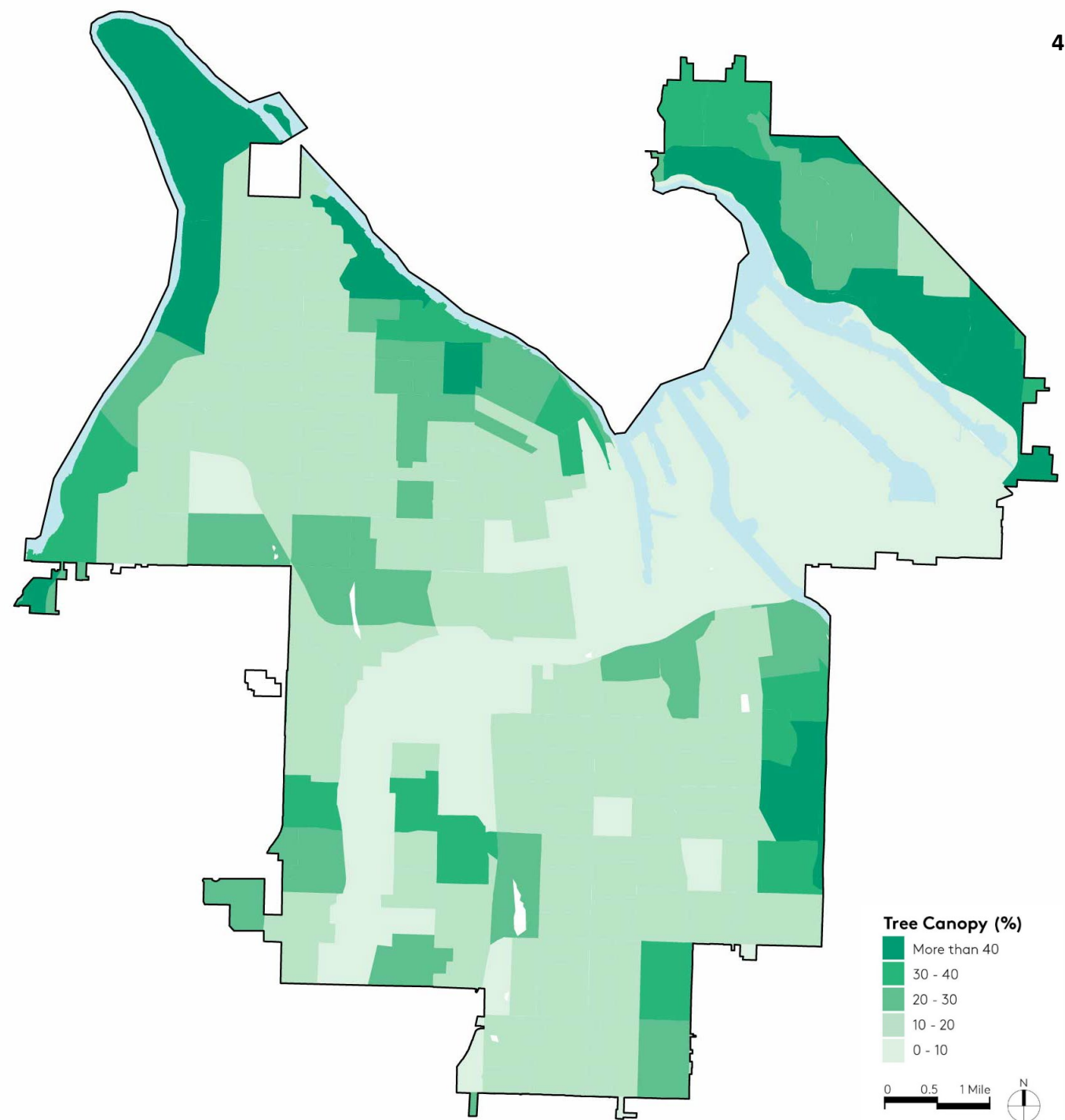
In relation to benchmarked cities:

- Eugene, OR (Middle housing)
  - Kirkland, WA (Middle housing, 2022 Tree & Landscaping ordinance, Green Factor Amendment)
  - Burien, WA (2021 Tree & Landscaping ordinance)
  - Lakewood, WA (2022 Tree Preservation ordinance)
  - Seattle, WA (2023 Tree ordinance)
- 
- Tacoma has the **lowest tree canopy cover with 20%** compared to Kirkland and Burien with 37%.
  - Tacoma has the **greatest difference in existing vs. target canopy cover per year** (a 50% increase by 2030).



# Existing Citywide Tree Canopy

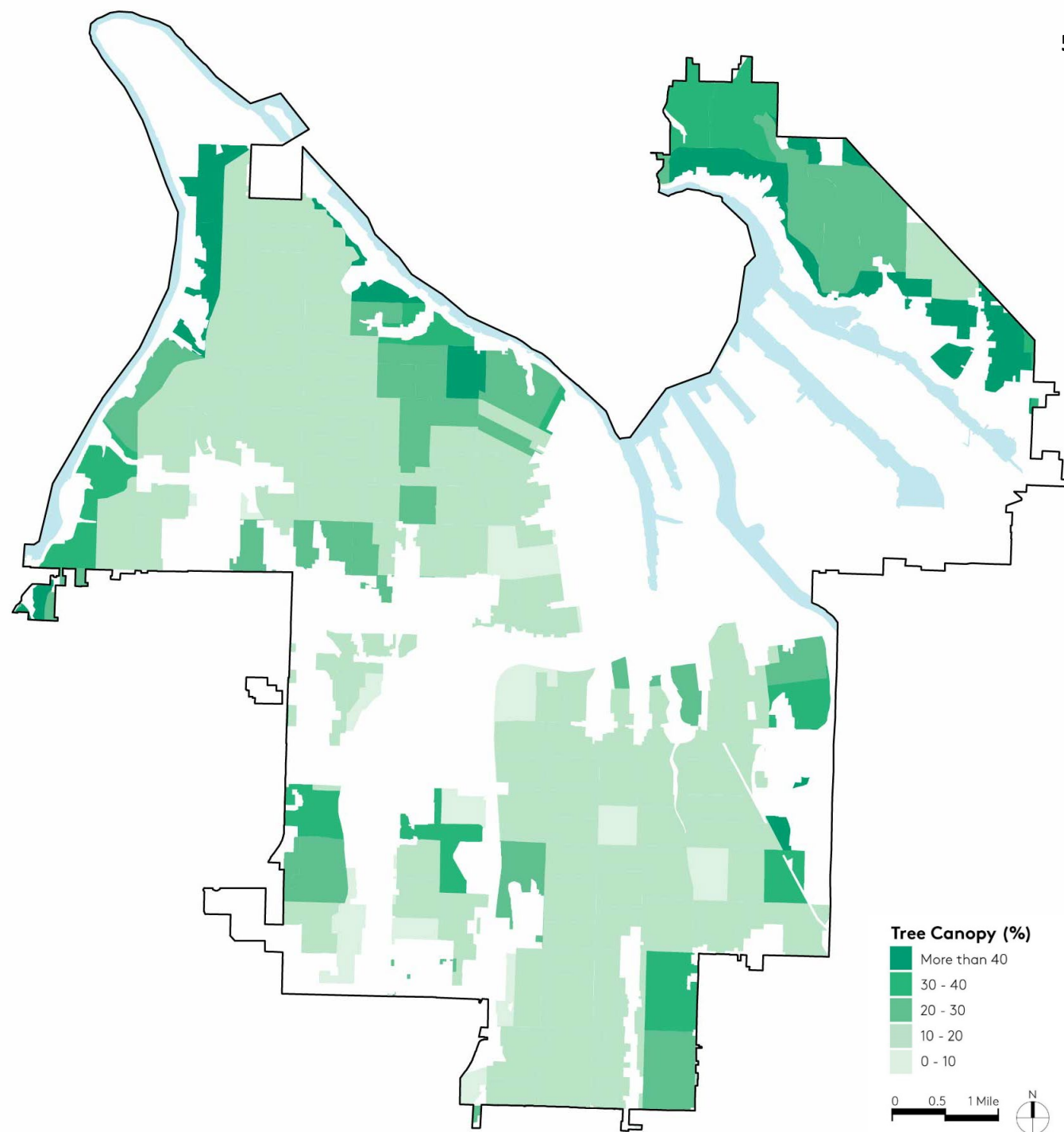
Tacoma's tree canopy is currently **20%** averaged across the city.



# Citywide Tree Canopy & Middle Housing

The existing tree canopy in Middle Housing zones is approximately **18%**.

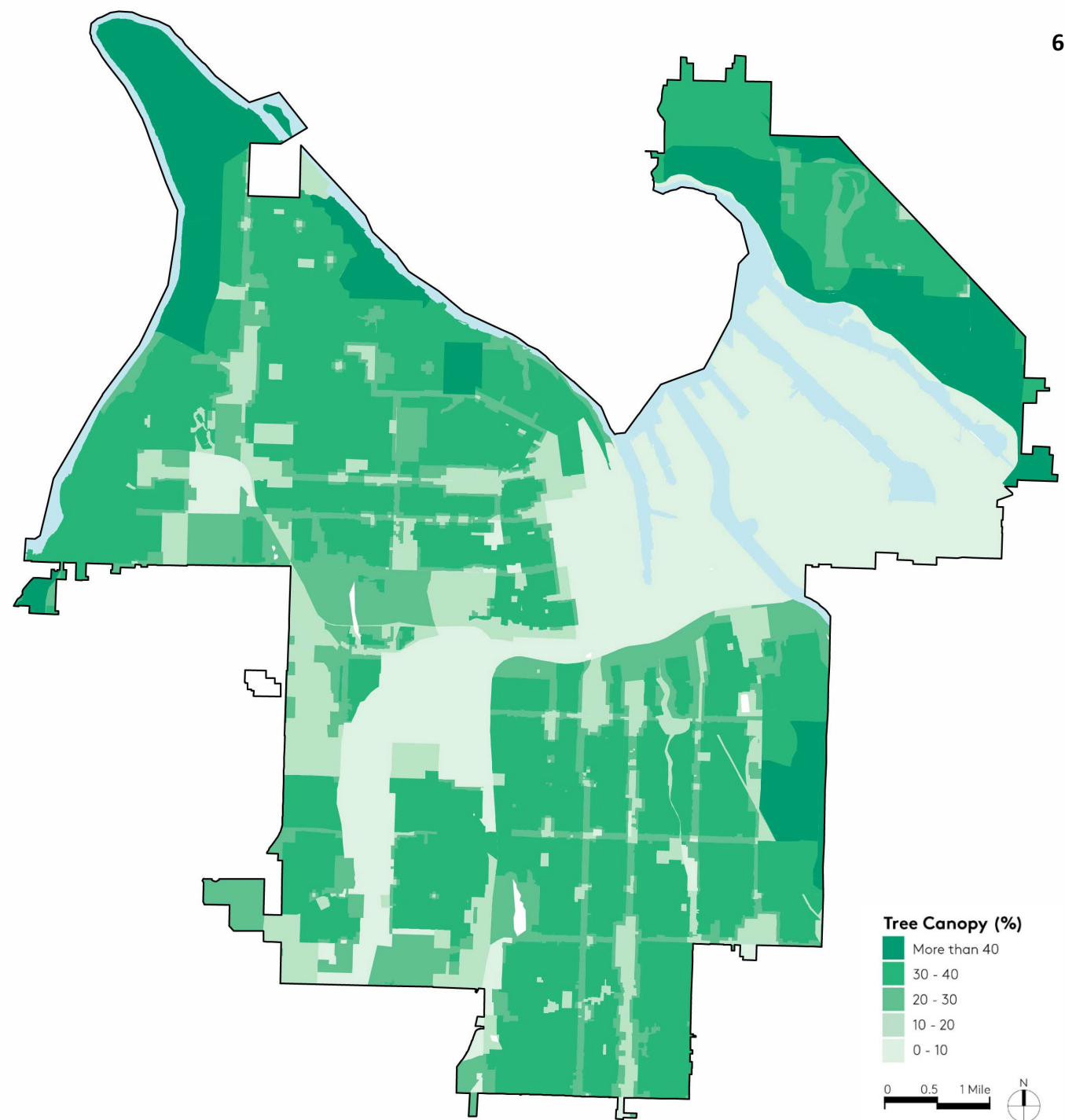
Middle housing zones cover approximately 50% of the city's land area, while public right-of-way covers approximately 20%.



# Citywide Tree Canopy & Middle Housing

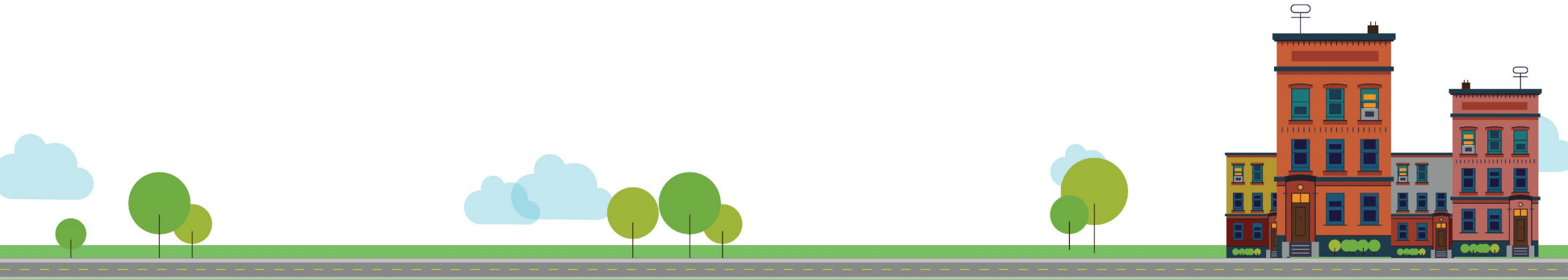
Right-of-way and Middle Housing are the two largest land areas with the greatest potential for increased tree canopy.

If the average tree canopy across Middle Housing zones and public rights-of-way grew to approximately **32%**, Tacoma could reach its **30%** tree canopy goal citywide.



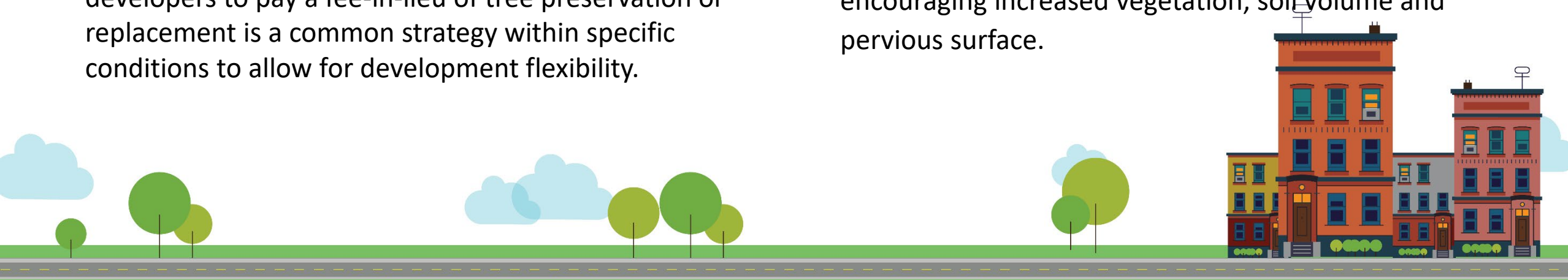
# More Trees **AND** Development

Addressing the housing crisis in tandem with a changing climate of more summer heat and winter rainfall requires allowing both development **AND** tree growth, rather than preferencing one at the expense of the other.



# Benchmarking: What Other Cities are Doing

- **Tree Preservation:** All benchmarked cities have permit requirements for tree removal on private property - both associated with new development and not associated with new development.
- **Flexibility & Incentives for Tree Preservation:** Where tree preservation would limit development capacity, flexibility of development standards enables by-right development capacity (i.e. building setback reduction, height increase, impervious surface bonus, parking reduction, etc.)
- **Fee In-Lieu or Variances:** When appropriate allowing developers to pay a fee-in-lieu of tree preservation or replacement is a common strategy within specific conditions to allow for development flexibility.
- **Standards for Tree Health:** Consider minimum soil volumes, clearances between trees, distances to pavement, species and size, and regulating encroachment on tree protection zones.
- **Maintenance & Establishment:** Specify required maintenance periods, maintenance bonds, security deposit / letters of credit for tree replacement is a common practice.
- **Green Factor:** Multiple cities use a Green Factor calculation to allow for development flexibility while encouraging increased vegetation, soil volume and pervious surface.



# Benchmarking: Tree Retention

## → Related to Development Activity

### Eugene, OR

Permit required for **Significant Trees (≥8" DBH)**

Exceptions apply:

- Residential Lots <20,000 SF occupied by a single family dwelling
- Lots >20,000 SF removal up to 5 significant trees
- Hazardous Trees
- Dead, dying, diseased trees
- Fire abatement (designated by the fire marshal)

### Lakewood, WA

Permit required for **Significant Trees, Perimeter Trees and Interior Trees**

Exceptions apply:

- Damaged or Diseased Trees
- Safety hazards

A **significant tree** is an existing tree which:

- a. When measured at four and one-half (4.5) feet above ground, has a **minimum diameter of nine 9" for evergreen trees and deciduous trees**;
- b. When measured at four and one-half (4.5) feet above ground, has a minimum diameter of **4" for Oregon white oaks** (also known as Garry oaks); and
- c. Regardless of the tree diameter, is determined to be significant by the Director due to the uniqueness of the species or provision of **important wildlife habitat**.

Tree protection plan required for significant trees and any trees over 3" DBH that are protected for retention credit.

### Burien, WA

Permit required for **all trees greater than 6" DBH**

Exceptions apply:

- Trees less than 6" DBH
- Hazard trees
- Regulated invasive species

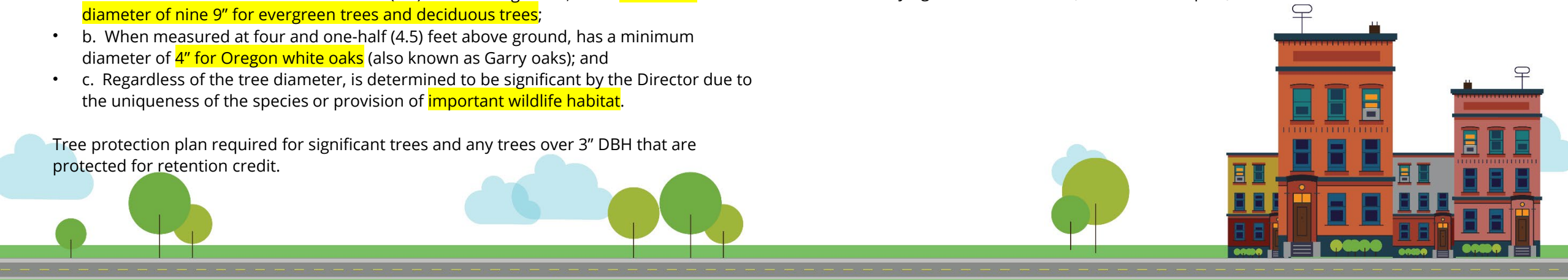
### Kirkland, WA

Permit required for

- **Regulated Tree** (A tree that is **at least 6" DBH** that is not listed on the Prohibited Plant List)
- **Landmark trees** (A regulated tree with **a minimum 26" DBH**)

Exceptions apply:

- Dead, dying, imminent hazard (with arborist report)



# Benchmarking: Tree Retention

## → Not Related to Development Activity

### Eugene, OR

Permit required for **Significant trees**

Exceptions apply:

- Residential Lots <20,000 SF occupied by a single family dwelling
- Lots >20,000 SF removal up to 5 significant trees
- Hazardous Trees
- Dead, dying, diseased trees
- Fire abatement (designated by the fire marshal)

### Kirkland, WA

Permit required for **Regulated and Landmark trees**

Exceptions apply:

- Dead, dying, imminent hazard (with arborist report).
- ≤10,000SF lots, max 2 regulated trees may be removed as long as min of 2 regulated trees remain.
- 10,001 - 20,000 SF lots max 3 regulated trees may be removed as long as min of 3 regulated trees remain.
- ≥20,001 SF lots max 4 regulated trees may be removed as long as min of 4 regulated trees remain.
- Replacement planting required for all removals of Regulated Trees

### Burien, WA

Permit required for **all trees greater than 6" DBH**

Exceptions apply:

- Minor tree removal with permit
- If removal will result in lot dropping below minimum tree density threshold
- All significant and exceptional trees on an undeveloped lot shall be retained.

### Lakewood, WA

Permit required for **Significant Trees**

Three options for tree replacement for significant tree removal

- Based on DBH size:
  - 2:1 diameter inches
- Based on Canopy Coverage:
  - Planted trees will compensate 1:1 for lost canopy when they reach maturity, according to arborist report
- Based on CO2 deductions:
  - Arborist report showing carbon sequestration value of trees (iTree used to confirm)

Permit required for removal of **Heritage Trees**

City staff and an ISA certified arborist shall evaluate any heritage trees prior to a decision on the removal permit. Permit approval will be granted if an arborist report demonstrates that alteration or removal is necessary for health and safety, infrastructure operation, protection of existing buildings, or to accomplish reasonable use of property per state law.

Recommendations for care, other than removal, will be considered

# Benchmarking: Tree Retention Flexibility & Incentives

to meet development allowances

to exceed development allowances

## Lakewood, WA has a comprehensive Tree Preservation “Incentive program”

(LMC 18A.70.320: Tree Preservation Incentives)

**Parking Reduction:** Credit for preservation of significant or heritage trees. For every significant tree and/or heritage tree preserved within the property, the required number of parking spaces may be reduced by one-half (0.5) spaces, provided the total reduction does not exceed five (5) percent of the total required parking spaces, when combined with all parking incentive credits.

**Density increase:** For multifamily uses, maximum density may increase by one (1) unit for each significant tree preserved on a property that is located in the Downtown District (not to exceed more than twenty (20) percent of the total allowable units). For multifamily use types, maximum density may increase by one (1) unit for each significant tree preserved on a property that is located in a census tract with a tree equity score of under the City’s 2018 average score of sixty-nine (69) (not to exceed more than twenty (20) percent of the total allowable units).

**Master plan flexibility for new developments:** Master planned development allows flexibility and variation design as long as there is a net benefit to the City. Significant and heritage tree preservation shall be included as a benefit under the master planned development required net benefit findings.

**Landscaping reduction for Oregon White Oak preservation:** A credit of one and one-half (1.5) square feet of vegetative buffer shall be given for every square foot of area devoted to new or the preservation of Oregon white oak tree use.

**Building setback reduction:** The Director may reduce a rear yard and/or side yard building setback to compensate for significant or heritage tree preservation; provided, that the setback is not reduced more than five (5) feet, is no closer to the property line than three (3) feet, is the minimum reduction required for tree preservation.

**Impervious surface bonus:** The Director may increase the amount of allowable impervious surface by five (5) percent to compensate for the preservation of a significant or heritage tree.

# Benchmarking: Tree Retention Flexibility & Incentives

to meet development allowances

to exceed development allowances

## Seattle has code flexibility for “Tree protection on sites undergoing development”

(SDCI 25.11.060, 25.11.070, 25.11.080)

### Neighborhood residential zones

**Permitted extension into front or rear yards** shall be limited to an area equal to the amount of the tree protection area not located within required yards. The maximum projection into the required front or rear yard shall be 50 percent of the yard requirement.

If the maximum lot coverage permitted on the site can be achieved without extending into either the tree protection area or required front and/or rear yards, then no such extension into required yards shall be permitted.

**Trees over 2 feet in diameter** measured 4.5 feet above the ground shall be identified on site plans. In order to protect such trees, an applicant may modify their development proposal to extend into front and/or rear yards in the same manner as provided for exceptional trees in subsection 25.11.060.A.

### Midrise and Commercial zones

**Trees over 2 feet in diameter** measured 4.5 feet above the ground shall be identified on site plans. In order to protect such trees, an applicant may modify their development proposal to extend into front and/or rear yards in the same manner as provided for exceptional trees in subsection 25.11.060.A.

### Lowrise zones

**Exceptional tree:** In order to preserve an exceptional tree, the following code modifications are allowed:

- a. **Permitted height.** For a principal structure with a base height limit of 40 feet that is subject to the pitched roof provisions of subsection 23.45.514.D, the Director may permit the ridge of a pitched roof with a minimum slope of 6:12 to extend up to a height of 50 feet if the increase is needed to accommodate, on an additional story, the amount of floor area lost by avoiding development within the tree protection area and the amount of floor area on the additional story is limited to the amount of floor area lost by avoiding development within the tree protection area.
- b. **Parking reduction.** A reduction in the parking quantity required by Section 23.54.015 and the standards of Section 23.54.030 may be permitted in order to protect an exceptional tree if the reduction would result in a project that would avoid the tree protection area.

### Trees over 2 feet in diameter

- In order to protect trees over 2 feet in diameter, an applicant may request and the Director may allow modification of development standards in the same manner and to the same extent as provided for exceptional trees in subsection 25.11.070.A.

## And Affordable housing Incentive programs

SDCI 23.58 Incentive Provisions

Subchapter V: Provisions for Extra Residential and Nonresidential Floor Area

**Bonus floor area for open space amenities:** Voluntary agreements for amenities. Where expressly permitted by the provisions of the zone, an applicant may achieve bonus floor area in part through a voluntary agreement for provision of amenities to mitigate impacts of the development, subject to the limits in this Chapter 23.58A.1. Except where limited in the provisions of the zone, amenities that may be provided for bonus floor area include:

- a. Neighborhood open space;
- b. Green street setbacks on lots abutting designated green streets;
- c. Green street improvements;
- d. Mid-block corridor; and
- e. Hillside terrace.

**Bonus ratio.** Unless otherwise specified in the provisions of the zone, amenities may be used to gain bonus floor area according to the following ratios and subject to the limits of this Section 23.58A.040:

- a. For a neighborhood open space, 7 square feet of bonus floor area per 1 square foot of qualifying neighborhood open space area (7:1).
- b. For a green street setback, 5 square feet of bonus floor area per 1 square foot of qualifying green street setback area (5:1).
- c. For a green street improvement, 5 square feet of bonus floor area per 1 square foot of qualifying green street improvement area (5:1).
- d. For a mid-block corridor, 7 square feet of bonus floor area per 1 square foot of qualifying mid-block corridor area (7:1).
- e. For a residential or non-residential hillside terrace, 5 square feet of bonus floor area per 1 square foot of qualifying hillside terrace area (5:1).

### Standards for neighborhood open space

A minimum of 35 percent of the open space shall be landscaped with grass, ground cover, bushes, and/or trees.

Payment-in-lieu of providing neighborhood open space

# Benchmarking: Tree Retention Fee in Lieu

**Allowing developers to pay a fee in lieu of tree preservation or replacement is a common strategy to allow for development flexibility.**

## Seattle

- Fee in lieu determined by Guide for Plant Appraisal, with additional fees for Significant and Exceptional trees to cover establishment of planted trees for a period (3-5 years)

## Lakewood

- \$400 fee per tree replaced off-site. No permit fee for tree removal when replaced onsite.

## Portland:

- Fees paid to Tree Planting and Preservation Fund in lieu of planting or preserving trees, both associated with new development and not associated with development. Fees cover cost of establishing a new tree in accordance with standards described by the City Forester. The cost includes materials and labor necessary to plant the tree, and to maintain it for 5 years.



**Affordable  
Housing**

# Benchmarking: Landscaping Code Maintenance

- Security deposit / letters of credit are required for all replacement trees to ensure survival (Victoria, B.C.)
- Bonds for proper maintenance
  - Burien
  - Lakewood
- Maintenance Periods:
  - 5 years / life of “development” (Kirkland)
  - Life of “project” (Burien)
  - Life of “project” (Seattle)
  - 3 years / life of “project” (Tacoma)



**Affordable  
Housing**

# Looking Ahead:

Tacoma Planning Commission has completed a draft of the proposed code amendments for Council consideration. Council will review the recommendation, provide public hearings and input opportunities, will make additional amendments to the proposed policy (as necessary), and will vote as the final decision-making authority for the amendments to the Code.

## Additional Resources:

Home In Tacoma AHAS website [cityoftacoma.org/HomeInTacoma](http://cityoftacoma.org/HomeInTacoma)

[Amenity Space and Tree Requirements Summary Sheet](#)

[Full Landscaping Code Analysis PowerPoint Presentation](#)

