

City of La Center Tree Canopy Assessment

The City of La Center recognizes the integral role that urban tree canopies play in enhancing the quality of life for its residents. This Tree Canopy Assessment outlines the numerous benefits of maintaining and expanding our urban tree canopy, the importance of protecting these natural resources, and the strategies for monitoring and improving canopy coverage.

Benefits of Urban Tree Canopies

Urban tree canopies provide a multitude of benefits that significantly enhance the quality of life for residents of La Center. Environmentally, trees improve air quality by filtering pollutants like carbon monoxide, sulfur dioxide and nitrogen dioxide. Their presence helps mitigate climate change through carbon sequestration, and the shade provided by tree canopies reduces the urban heat island effect, making the city cooler and requiring less energy to cool buildings. Trees also play a crucial role in managing stormwater; their canopies and root systems absorb rainfall, which reduces runoff and lessens the risk of flooding and their root networks can help to stabilize slopes and prevent erosion.

Beyond their environmental impact, trees contribute to public health by providing green spaces that encourage physical activity and reduce stress, promoting overall physical and mental well-being. Trees also help to absorb the sounds of traffic, reducing traffic noise by up to 40-percent. Economically, tree-lined streets can boost property values and improve curb appeal, attracting potential buyers. Tree-lined streets and parks encourage outdoor activities and community gatherings, fostering a sense of belonging and social cohesion. Collectively, these benefits underscore the importance of urban tree canopies in creating healthier, more sustainable, and vibrant urban environments.

Importance of Tree Canopy Protection

Protecting our urban tree canopy is crucial for maintaining the myriad benefits that trees provide. Urban trees face numerous threats, including development pressures, disease, and climate change. To ensure that La Center continues to enjoy the benefits of its tree canopy, it is essential to implement and enforce measures that protect existing trees and support their growth.

Preservation Strategies:

Development Guidelines: The City of La Center has established Chapter 18.350 Municipal Code to regulate the removal of trees and prescribe preventative protection measures to avoid damage to trees during site development in order to preserve the wooded character of the city and to protect trees as a natural resource of the city. This code sets forth standards to safeguard trees during construction and development by requiring a tree protection plan and protective measures such as fencing around root zones and restrictions on damaging canopies. The code stipulates conditions under which trees can be removed and mandates their replacement, typically on a 1:1 basis, to ensure continued canopy coverage. Additionally, the chapter requires permits for activities impacting trees, such as removal or significant pruning.

Commented [AE1]: Include as a policy in parks element. We may need to wordsmith a bit to frame as a policy. Perhaps “La Center shall continue to regulate tree removal and preventative protection measures to avoid damage to trees during site development to preserve the wooded character of the city and to protect trees as a natural resource of the City”

Maintenance Programs: The City should continue to implement regular tree maintenance practices, such as pruning and working with an arborist to monitor the health of vulnerable trees, to keep trees in optimal condition.

Commented [AE2]: Include as policy in parks element

Public Awareness: The City should educate residents and businesses about the importance of trees and how they can contribute to their preservation. The City should also consider becoming an Arbor Day Foundation “Tree City USA” to build public awareness of the importance of trees and demonstrate the City’s commitment to protecting and enhancing the City’s trees and tree canopy.

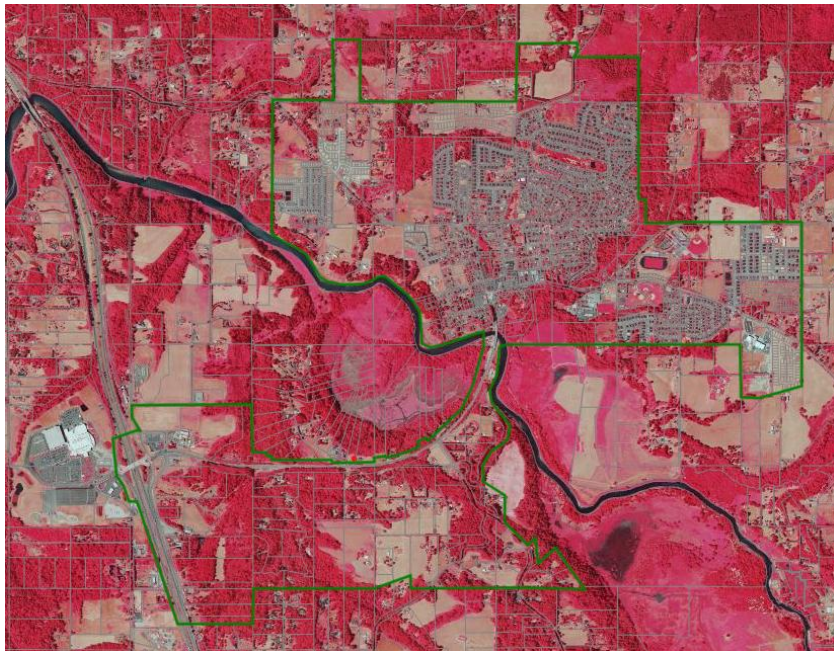
Commented [AE3]: Include these two items as separate policies in the parks element

Current Tree Canopy Coverage

Infrared Aerial Photography analysis was used to determine the current tree canopy coverage within the City’s Urban Growth Boundary (UGB). Red areas indicate vegetative coverage, with darker reds indicating tree canopies.

Based on 2021 data, La Center’s current tree canopy coverage stands at 32-percent. This figure reflects the proportion of the city’s Urban Growth Boundry area covered by trees, indicating a significant presence of green space within our urban environment.

Commented [AE4]: Where does this data come from? Ask Bryan. Need to cite in Parks element.



2021 Infrared Photo of La Center with UGB outlined in green

Commented [AE5]: Let's include this photo in the parks element

Future Monitoring

To ensure the continued health and preservation of La Center's tree canopy, the City will conduct monitoring of canopy coverage every 3 to 5 years. This regular assessment will help track changes in tree coverage, identify areas needing improvement, and evaluate the effectiveness of our tree management strategies.

Commented [AE6]: This should be a policy we include in the parks element.

Monitoring Plan:

1. **Data Collection:** Utilize updated aerial imagery, remote sensing technologies and on-the-ground surveys to gather accurate data on tree canopy coverage.
2. **Analysis and Reporting:** Analyze the collected data to assess trends and generate update this document to inform future planning and policy decisions.
3. **Community Involvement:** Encourage public participation in canopy monitoring efforts, including volunteer tree surveys and community-based data collection initiatives.

Conclusion

The City of La Center is committed to preserving and enhancing its urban tree canopy for the benefit of all residents. By understanding the value of our tree canopies, implementing protective measures, and monitoring coverage regularly, we aim to foster a healthier, more sustainable, and vibrant City, and to preserve the green spaces and tree lined streets that contribute to small-town charm that makes La Center special.

Commented [AE7]: We could wordsmith this into a goal as well