

RE: Support for extending mitigation fees for trees in development with DBH 36 inches or greater (Title 11.50)

Dear Chair and Members of the Planning and Sustainability Commission:

Thank you all for volunteering your time as commissioners; thank you for holding this hearing today. Our group —Trees for Life Oregon—is here to advocate for extending the mitigation fees for trees in development situations with DBH (diameter at breast height, 4 ½ feet above grade) 36 inches or greater.

Collectively, the individuals in our group have for decades been planting trees and working to preserve them, while listening to our neighborhood tree teams in Concordia, Irvington, and Cully, and to tree advocates and neighborhood stewards citywide. Our experience ranges from tree care to urban planning to writing and teaching about trees and the environment.

The goal of Trees for Life Oregon is to help Portland's trees, but especially its large trees, reach their full potential in every part of the city. Large-form trees are key green infrastructure and should be treated as such. They clean our air, absorb noise, relieve stress, manage storm-water, and improve health while protecting against urban heat island effects. The scientific literature and our own experience tell us that in order for our large trees to provide maximum services for urban residents, they need time, space, and care.

Cutting down large trees means not only losing the time it takes every tree to grow into a large, mature specimen. It also means contradicting Portlanders' efforts and aspiration to be a model green city, as they are expressed in the City's 2015 Climate Action Plan, and in community organizers and advocates convincing 60% of voters to approve the 2018 Portland Clean Energy Fund where 10-15% of the revenues are slated for green infrastructure.

We believe that mitigation fees are no substitute for the tremendous benefits that large trees provide to those living in their immediate vicinity. Retaining them everywhere, but especially in under-served communities with well-documented disproportionately low canopy, is a matter of equity. Low-income, minority, and immigrant communities deserve the same tree benefits as residents in leafier, wealthier neighborhoods. Moreover, trees and affordable housing are not mutually exclusive: thoughtful design can make room for both.

Though a mitigation fee is an imperfect tool for valuing the key health and infrastructure services a big tree provides over time if stewarded to reach its full lifespan, we strongly support an extension of the fee covering trees with DBH 36 inches or greater.

Thank you,



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