



Lakewood Tree Code Review

Fact Sheet | March 2022

The Values of Trees

Trees are valuable for their ability to clean the air we breathe, provide shade and moderate temperatures, reduce energy costs, serve as habitat for wildlife, provide beauty, raise property values, and many other benefits.



How does Lakewood plan for a complete community including trees?

Lakewood as a long-standing urban community has many responsibilities to its residents and businesses:

- Providing opportunities for housing at all income levels and employment space for jobs to meet projected growth under the Growth Management Act and regional growth strategy,
- Offering parks and recreation, emergency services, transportation, stormwater, and other infrastructure,
- Requiring landscaping and parking standards for new development, and
- Protecting critical areas and buffers, such as wetlands, fish and wildlife habitat, flood hazard areas, geologically hazardous areas, and critical aquifer recharge areas.



Tree canopy regulations reflect those responsibilities. Larger trees are protected on a site, particularly within critical areas and buffers. Trees and other landscaping are added in new parking and building setback areas. If development would impact trees, replacement trees or mitigation is required.

How does Lakewood regulate trees?

Lakewood regulates the removal of significant trees (larger evergreen and deciduous trees including Garry Oaks) and provides incentives and standards to help retain trees. The removal of “significant” trees is regulated, and incentives help preserve trees that benefit the community and environment.

The regulation of significant trees on residential, commercial, and institutional sites is contained in Lakewood Municipal Code (LMC) section [18A.70 Article III](#). Industrial lands are exempt from tree regulations in LMC 18A.70, but the City applies the State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) in [LMC 14.02](#) to such development to determine the significance and need for mitigation. For all development, Lakewood also protects trees in critical areas and associated buffers in [Title 14](#).

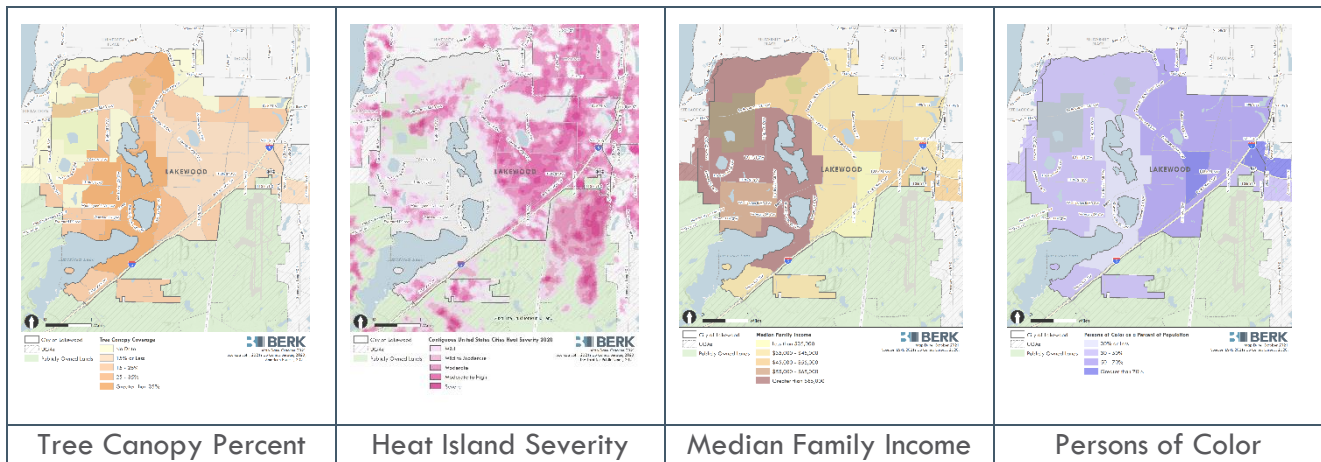
The City enforces its requirements through the review of project permits, and also by levying fines and penalties if compliance is not achieved. Funds collected from tree preservation enforcement are applied towards tree preservation and maintenance programs.

What is the state of tree canopy in Lakewood?

Lakewood’s citywide urban tree canopy equals about 26% of lands. About 72% of the tree canopy is on private lands. (PLANIT GEO, 2022)

Lakewood is an urban community with a mall, commercial corridors, and industrial parks, as well as residential districts. Most of the tree canopy is within the City’s residential districts. Where there is more pavement and less trees, there can be a “heat island” effect, that can increase temperatures. These conditions can be found predominantly in eastern Lakewood where there also tends to be a higher proportion of Persons of Color and lower income households. The City is considering developing a tree canopy goal that could address overall canopy shares and greater equity in its distribution.

Tree Canopy and Community Demographics (Note: More Intense Colors are Greater Amounts)



American Forest, 2021

Trust for Public Lands 2022

US Census 2020

US Census 2020

Why is Lakewood reviewing its Tree Code? What is the schedule?

Community members have expressed interest and concerns in how the City manages trees. The City Council formed an Ad Hoc Tree Committee in February 2022 and intends to develop potential legislative proposals by summer 2022. Areas of review are anticipated to include the tree types and sizes protected, exemptions, permits and fees, and penalties for non-compliance.

The Ad Hoc Tree Committee is scheduled to meet through April 2022 and will develop a report. The Planning Commission intends to take up recommendations and hold meetings and hearings between May and June 2022. City Council review and consideration is anticipated by July and August 2022.

How can I participate?

View tree canopy information and the progress of the Ad Hoc Tree Advisory Committee at the City’s project website:

<https://cityoflakewood.us/tree-committee/>. Share your views by taking a survey when posted, and by providing comments during Planning Commission and City Council public hearing opportunities.

CONTACT INFORMATION

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