

PRO TIP TREE PRESERVATION AND PROTECTION

Background

In 2022, the Lakewood City Council adopted tree preservation and protection standards for significant trees located on residential, commercial, institutional and industrial lands. [LMC 18A.70.300](#) regulates the removal of significant trees from public and private lands.

The City's tree preservation program is aimed to assist in a citywide goal to achieve 40% tree canopy cover by 2050. Tree preservation protects and enhances critical areas, minimizes the impacts of climate change, facilitates aquifer recharge, reduces erosion and stormwater runoff, and helps with public and private open spaces.

Significant Trees

Per LMC 18A.70 Article III Tree Preservation, significant trees are considered:

- **Evergreen and deciduous trees:** Measured at four and one-half (4.5) feet above ground, has a minimum diameter of nine (9) inches.
- **Oregon white oaks:** Measured at four and one-half (4.5) feet above ground, has a minimum diameter of four (4) inches. Also known as Garry Oaks. See *also critical area and shoreline protection section below.*

Regardless of the tree diameter, the City's Planning and Public Works Director can determine a tree is significant due to uniqueness of species or importance to wildlife habitat. Additionally, damaged or diseased trees will not be considered significant following an assessment submitted by a registered landscape architect, certified nursery professional or arborist in concurrence by the City. Protected tree species such as Garry Oaks may have different preservation standards, however.

Critical Area and Shoreline Protection

Oregon White Oaks or Garry Oaks as they are commonly referred to is Washington state's only native oak tree species. Garry Oaks provides distinct woodland ecosystem services for a wide range of native wildlife and fauna, with mature oaks providing the most ecological value. These tree species are in decline due to climate change and human activity and development.

In addition to City significant tree protection requirements, Garry Oaks are also a protected tree species and habitat regulated under both the Washington State [Growth Management Act \(GMA\)](#) and [Shoreline Management Act \(SMA\)](#).

Under these state laws, Garry Oaks are a regulated critical area called Fish and Wildlife Habitat Conservation Areas (FWHCA). Development regulations for the protection of FWHCA can be found in our critical area regulations in [LMC Chapter 14.154](#) and Title 16, Lakewood's Shoreline Master Program.



Please review Critical Areas and Shoreline Permitting Pro-Tips for more information.

Tree Removal

Lots of 10,000 square feet or more, located in single-family residential zoning districts are required to obtain a tree removal permit prior to the removal of trees on their property.

Lots under 10,000 square feet may be subject to obtaining a tree removal permit if they are located within a critical area, on a shoreline, or if Oregon White Oaks are present.

Criteria for Preservation

Maximum Tree Removal on Developed Properties. Significant trees on existing single-family lots may be removed with a tree removal permit and without tree replacement, except Oregon white oaks which are regulated by LMC 18A.70.330, based on the following:

Maximum Tree Removal on Existing Single-Family Lots		
Lot Size	Maximum number of significant trees allowed to be removed in 1 year	Maximum number of significant trees allowed to be removed in 5 years
Lots up to 10,000 sq. ft.	N/A	N/A
Lots 10,001 to 30,000 sq. ft.	2	4
Lots 30,001 sq. ft. or greater	4	8

Perimeter Trees. All significant trees within twenty (20) feet of the lot perimeter or required buffer, whichever is greater, shall be preserved; except that significant trees may be removed if required for the siting and placement of driveway and road access, buildings, vision clearance areas, utilities, sidewalks or pedestrian walkways, or storm drainage facilities and other similar required improvements, subject to the discretion of the Director. You can find more information at [LMC 18A.70.320\(C\)\(2\)](#).

Interior Trees. A percentage of all significant trees within the interior of a lot, excluding the perimeter area, shall be preserved within the applicable zoning district. You can find more information at [LMC 18A.70.320\(C\)\(3\)](#).

Example of Tree Survey Table

Tree No.	Species	Size	Health/Condition	Tree Location: Perimeter (P) Interior Tree (I)	Retain or Remove	Nonsignificant Trees (healthy & less than significant tree size)
1	Garry Oak	12"	Good	I	Retain	
2	Garry Oak	6 "	Dead	P	Remove	
3	Douglas fir	24"	Damaged	P	Remove	
4	Douglas fir	9"	Poor	I	Remove	
5	Douglas fir	7"	Fair	P	Retain	X

Replacement

On-Site Replacement

- On-Site replacement has several aspects applicants should pay attention to, including; DBH Size, Canopy Coverage, Carbon Reductions, and different criteria for replacement options. You can find more information from [LMC 18A.70.320\(I\)\(1\)](#).

Off-Site Replacement

- The planting of the required replacement trees at locations approved by the Planning & Public Works [Director](#) throughout the City. Plantings shall be completed prior to completion of the [project permit](#) requiring tree replacement.
- Payment in lieu of replacement may be made to the City Tree Fund for planting of trees in other areas of the City.
 - The payment of an amount equivalent to the estimated cost of buying and planting the trees that would otherwise have been required to be planted on site,
 - As determined by the City's Tree Replacement [Fee Schedule](#).
 - Payment in lieu of planting shall be made at the time of the issuance of any building permit or completion of the project permit (i.e site development permit) requiring the tree replacement, whichever occurs first.

Emergency Removal

- Emergency removal may occur if all the following conditions are met:
 - The City is notified the following business day of the unpermitted action;
 - Visual documentation (i.e., photographs, video, etc.) is made available; and
 - The felled tree remains on site for City inspection.
 - Replacement required.



City of Lakewood

- Non-single-family use: The property owner will be required to provide replacement trees as established in LMC 18A.70.320(I), Replacement.
- Single-family use: The property owner will not be required to provide replacement trees.
- Should the City determine that the tree(s) did not pose an emergency condition, the owner shall be cited for a violation.

Exemptions

Unless located in a FWHCA and SMP jurisdiction, a permit is not required if:

- Located on lots less than 10,000 square feet in single-family residential zones except:
 - As part of a subdivision application per LMC 18A.70.320.
 - Lots contain Garry Oaks.
 - Where tree preservation is required as part of State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) mitigation.
 - In the event a permit is not required for the establishment of a use.
- Removal of nonsignificant tree not covered in LMC Chapter 18A.70.
- Removal or pruning of trees by a public agency or a franchised utility within the associated right-of-way and easement for installing and maintaining utilities and multi-modal transportation networks.

More information

- Review [LMC Chapter 18A.70](#) regarding tree preservation.
- Review [LMC Chapter 14.154](#) and Title 16, the Lakewood's SMP on priority habitat Oregon white oak woodland "Garry Oak" critical area protection standards.
- Contact our planning team at planning@cityoflakewood.us or 253-512-2261.
- Stop by during Planner of the Day, Tuesday-Thursday, 9am-12pm.
- Request a pre-application conference by submitting an application [here](#).
- Review [LMC Chapter 18A.20](#) on application intake, review, public noticing procedures and timelines.