

Tree Removal in Sherwood Forest (Findings Feb, 2018)

SFCC was asked by its members concerned about the retention and removal policies regarding the 'significant' trees in our neighborhood. We hope to provide current information and updates on this subject to increase communication and understanding between SF neighbors.

Jennifer Ewing, (CoB Environmental Stewardship Program Manager), informed SFCC in writing, "In January of 2017 we adopted new permit requirements for clearing and grading, which require a permit for the removal of more than five significant trees. Prior to that, our code had a different way of calculating the threshold for needing a permit for tree removal, based on the square footage of the land that was disturbed."

Here is a link to the current policy which can answer any of the more technical aspects - "CoB Tree Removal FAQs and the Bridle Trails Ordinance variant FAQ" – these documents define when a permit is required, etc. <https://development.bellevuewa.gov/zoning-and-land-use/zoning-requirements/trees/>

The Bridle Trails neighborhood created an ordinance some years ago, that requires a more thorough review, but they have had problems enforcing that policy lately and are therefore currently pursuing a Tree Master Plan for CoB like Redmond's.

In Redmond, a Tree Removal Permit is required for removal of any significant tree within the City of Redmond regardless of its condition. A tree removal permit is not required for routine maintenance. Routine maintenance includes selective pruning. All Tree Removal Permits associated to single-family properties are free. For all other properties, a flat fee is required.

Both SFCC and Bridle Trails have created petitions for a comprehensive city master plan that some of you may have signed already, however, there lacks a concerted effort by the Bellevue neighborhoods to move these petitions through city council. The CoB Environmental Stewardship Program is aware of the petition.

SFCC is planning to join with the Bridle Trails movement and assist with getting other Bellevue neighborhoods to endorse a master tree plan, which would make the Bellevue tree retention policies closer to that of Redmond's.

Bridle Trails Master Plan petition (Change.org)

<https://www.change.org/p/bellevue-city-council-create-a-tree-master-plan-for-bellevue>

SFCC urges Sherwood Forest homeowners to sign the above Bridle Trails Change.org sponsored petition to increase the visibility of this request to CoB.

The Sherwood Forest neighborhood was established in the late 1950s as a forested neighborhood where large Douglas Fir, Cedar, and Spruce trees were part of the attraction to many homeowners that moved here then and over the years. The 'Forest' creates the natural Pacific Northwest environment character of shade and habitat that is not found in typical tract housing developments.

If you are interested in volunteering to help the Sherwood Forest neighborhood retain its significant trees and stay a forest, just let us know at Sherwood Forest Community Club sfccbellevue@hotmail.com

FYI - Tree 'Sail Thinning'

While SFCC was researching tree removal policies, in the interest of finding out if “tree limb thinning” – or “sail thinning” might be an option that SFCC could propose to our homeowners, (in lieu of total tree removal for a safety concern), SFCC contacted 2 ISA-Certified Arborists in the Bellevue area, unaffiliated with any tree removal firms for their input.

Both arborists stated that tree 'sail thinning', in general, on large firs is not a proven method to reduce the chances of limbs falling - it could even make the tree less healthy as the tree now has less branches to absorb sunlight.

These arborists informed SFCC to caution homeowners to “seek out an arborist that is unaffiliated with a tree removal company if they have questions on a tree. Some tree removal companies may employ non-ISA-Certified ‘arborists’ biased towards removal. Each tree is unique and will require a unique solution”.

The reality is that Sherwood Forest homeowners live in a forest of large fir trees where branches, or even whole trees, may fall during a windstorm from trees on your property, or from trees on your neighbor’s property.