



TREE AND VEGETATION RETENTION REQUIREMENTS

(For requirements pertaining to tree and vegetation removal on *developed* single family-zoned parcels, please refer to the “Tree and Vegetation Retention Requirements for Developed Single Family Parcels” handout.)

What type of approval do I need to remove trees and vegetation?

- Unless exempted under *Federal Way Revised Code* (FWRC) 19.120.030, removal of trees and vegetation requires compliance with the city’s tree and vegetation retention standards.
- Removal of trees and vegetation associated with a development proposal is subject to approval of the building or land development permit (e.g. land use approval, subdivision, etc.) application associated with the proposed development.
- All proposed new development and redevelopment is subject to the tree and vegetation retention standards contained in FWRC 19.120.130.
- Removal of trees and/or vegetation on a developed commercial/multifamily lot is also subject to the tree and vegetation retention standards.
- Removal of trees on an undeveloped lot without an associated building or land development permit application shall be reviewed subject to Process III and must meet criteria listed in FWRC 19.120.020(4)(b).

What if I would like to remove hazard trees or nuisance vegetation?

Hazard trees¹ and nuisance vegetation¹ may be removed with the approval of the Director of Community Development or his/her designee. Prior to removal of the trees/vegetation, the property owner shall submit a written request to remove the hazard/nuisance trees/vegetation. The city may require that a qualified expert approved by the city make the determination that the trees and vegetation present a hazard or nuisance to persons or property.

What are the requirements for tree and vegetation retention/replacement?

- Existing trees and vegetation in good health and not considered to be invasive species shall be retained to the maximum extent possible in all developments.
- A minimum tree density requirement is established for proposed new uses on vacant sites as shown in the following table:

¹ Refer to definitions in this handout.

Minimum Tree Density Requirements for Vacant or Redeveloping Sites (FWRC Table 19.120.130-1)	
Land Use Designation	Required Tree Unit Density ^{2,3}
BC, BN, CE, OP, PO	20 tree units/acre
SF Residential zones	25 tree units/acre
RM 1800, RM 2400, RM 3600	30 tree units/acre

- The following table specifies the tree unit credits established for retained (*existing*) trees and planting of new (*replacement*) trees:

Tree Unit Credits (FWRC Table 19.120.130-2)	
<i>Existing Tree Category</i>	Tree Unit Credit
Existing Tree 1" to 6" d.b.h.	1.0 tree units per tree
Existing Tree >6" to 12" d.b.h.	1.5 tree units per tree
Existing Tree >12" to 18" d.b.h.	2.0 tree units per tree
Existing Tree >18" to 24" d.b.h.	2.5 tree units per tree
Existing Tree > 24" d.b.h.	3.0 tree units per tree
<i>Replacement Tree Category</i>	
Replacement Tree, Small Canopy Species (Mature canopy area < 450 SF)	.50 tree units per tree planted
Replacement Tree, Medium Canopy Species (Mature canopy area 450 to 1,250)	1.0 tree units per tree planted
Replacement Tree, Large Canopy Species (Mature canopy area > 1,250 SF)	1.5 tree units per tree planted

*Refer to the "Recommended Tree Species" handout.

What is the penalty for removing trees without proper approval?

Removal of trees without proper approval is subject to civil penalties and additional fees of up to \$1,000.00 for each tree removed, or up to the marketable value of each tree removed. In addition, restoration of any environmental and property damage is required. Refer to FWRC 19.120.270 for additional details.

Relevant Definitions from the FWRC

Clearing means the destruction and removal of vegetation by manual, mechanical, or chemical methods.

Critical root zone shall be defined as: an area equal to 12 inches radius for every one inch of tree diameter measured at four and one-half feet above ground.

Diameter at Breast Height (dbh) means the diameter of a tree trunk as measured at 4.5 feet above the ground surface.

Hazard tree shall mean any tree which, in the opinion of the city or an expert approved by the city (such as, but not limited to, a professional forester, certified arborist, or landscape architect), poses an unreasonable risk of failure and poses a hazard to a permanent structure or high use outdoor area.

² Trees that are damaged and/or diseased, are a hazard or nuisance, or invasive species shall not be credited towards satisfying the tree units per acre requirement as noted in FWRC Table 19.120.130-1. At the discretion of the city, damaged or diseased or standing dead trees may be retained and counted toward the tree requirement if it is demonstrated that such trees will provide important wildlife habitat and are not classified as dangerous trees.

³ Trees located within critical area buffers shall be credited towards satisfying the tree units per acre requirement as noted in FWRC Table 19.120.130-1. Critical area buffers shall comply with the requirements set forth in FWRC Title 19, Division V.

Invasive species include non-native species of plants or animals that out-compete native species in a specific habitat and that cause or are likely to cause economic or environmental harm or harm to human, animal or plant health. Invasive species include species on the noxious weed list maintained by the King County Noxious Weed Control Board. See also *Native Vegetation* and *Nuisance Vegetation*.

Native vegetation includes native, undisturbed areas or rehabilitation of previously disturbed areas that consist of trees, plants, forest litter, and understory indigenous to the Pacific Northwest or near natives that are suitable for the Pacific Northwest climate. Invasive species, such as Himalayan Blackberry or Scotch Broom are not native species.

Nuisance vegetation shall mean any tree or vegetation that, in the opinion of the city or an expert approved by the city (such as, but not limited to a professional forester, certified arborist, or landscape architect), is an invasive variety, is an allergen, or due to its location is causing or is likely to cause damage to a permanent structure, or other economic or environmental harm or harm to human, animal, or plant health that cannot be mitigated without removal of the tree or vegetation.

Topping means a pruning cut to the main stem of a mature tree. Such cuts can result in serious decay and/or forcing out growth of weakly attached upright sprouts below the cut. Topping also results in permanent alteration of tree architecture. For purposes of this chapter, topping shall be treated the same as tree removal.

Tree means any self-supporting perennial woody plant characterized by one main stem or trunk of at least six inches in diameter measured four and one-half feet above ground, or a multi-stemmed trunk system with a definite crown, maturing at a height of at least 20 feet above ground level.

Trees-Deciduous means trees that shed or lose their foliage at the end of the growing season.

Trees-Evergreen means trees that retain their leaves for more than one growing season.

Tree unit is a measurement to give value to the number of trees retained on a site. [FWRC] Table 19.120.130-2 assigns tree unit credits based upon the size of the existing or newly planted trees. For new trees, tree units vary depending on the size that the trees will reach at maturity (smaller size at maturity, fewer tree unit credits).

How do I find a Qualified Expert?

A list of certified arborists may be located at www.pnwisa.org, www.isa-arbor.com, or call the Pacific Northwest Chapter of International Society of Arboriculture at (800) 335-4391. If using “Tree Service” in the yellow pages look for the “certified arborist” logo. Be sure to check references and information on licensing, bonding, and insurance.

NOTE: This is an overview of tree and vegetation retention requirements, for more details and information visit our website at www.cityoffederalway.com.