

Comments on Camas Urban Tree Program Draft

The project may be well motivated, but it is incomplete and does not address the majority of the geographical characteristics of the City of Camas or the cost to both the taxpayers and utilities that serve the citizens of the City of Camas.

The Draft addresses a small portion of the City, classically what is referred to as "flat land". It does not address the bulk of the land area of the City which are "hill sides".

The summary, quoted from Funding Trees for Health, does not apply, as I will explain. The studies referred to do not sound like the City of Camas, a northwest area that is, at best, a temperate climate, not in need of trees to cool the air; we have more cold days than hot. They may lend beauty to streets, but at what costs? Landscaping can increase property values, but trees that block views of notable sights, such as a Lake, a Mansion, a Mountain, etc., result in property values (per Clark County Assessors Manual on Values of Views).

Let me explain; the best place for trees is in a forest, whether natural or commercial, such as those that are designated on Federal or State lands, or cultivated (harvested and replanted) for the tree itself or the fruit it may bare. The trees planted throughout the City for the purposes of reducing harmful air pollutants, lowering ambient temperatures, or regulating water quality are neither efficient or measureable. The location of the City of Camas, surrounded by forest lands and the wind currents of the Columbia Gorge make it impossible to assess any such benefits.

The planting of trees in the median of highways and parkways of City Streets between the curb and the citizens property line is contrary to the purpose of those spaces for the following reasons: the median strips are usually well lighted, but when trees are planted there, they grow into the light paths so that the function of the street lighting is lost. Placing trees in the parkway along the side of the streets, where utilities are placed underground, is only waiting for time to either uproot the sidewalks, curbs or disrupt the utilities. Another issue with the parkway space is the assumption that the City makes when it asks the property owner to lay concrete, landscape and maintain those item forever without any such law that commits that neighbor to City property to invest in and maintain someone elses property, i.e., that of the City. If it is "customary", it needs to stop, because it is not equal treatment nor provided for in any deed.

Finally, most hill side developments are accompanied by another asset of that location; a view of another asset of the City or the State. To require the planting of trees that may block or obstruct such a view is contrary to enhancing the value of that property. There are numerous examples of hill side communities that have stipulations in their Covenants, Conditions and Restrictions that state Members "Landscaping is not allowed to block anothers view". That directive also exists with the City of Camas, a note 5 on 4 lots in the Lacamas Shores Development that states, "Site obscuring fences, walls, or new vegetation along N.W Lake Road on Lots 35, 36, 41 and 42 will not be allowed. Any fence, wall or new vegetation placed along said lots will be restricted to a maximum height of 36 inches when measured from the existing Lake Road grade" (Book H Page 566, 9/19/1990). The purpose of that directive was that the council decided that a driver sitting in their car should be able to see the Lake for NW Lake Road. What would be beneficial

for the goal of this committee would be for the City to adopt a plan for the removal of any and all landscaping along Lake Road and other streets that block views of Lacamas Lake or other notable sights. The second part of this section is how does the City plan to enforce the existing (1990) position of the City where this code has not been enforced? Code 18.13.053, 2. Maintenance, "pruning for health of tree, not for view enhancement" is not acceptable, especially when that policy results in economic loss to the landowner.

As you can surmise from the above comments, your draft is incomplete; the draft falls short of any meaningful attempt to protect what trees need protection or the removal of trees that should not be placed where they are.

I may not live long enough to see what happens if the current draft is adopted, but most of you will.

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