



Dear Friend,

You may have seen a recent story and editorial in *The Oregonian* about the removal of trees by a downtown developer. Members of the Urban Forestry Commission and the Parks team were concerned that the reporting didn't tell the entire story.



Chair Joe Poracsky and Vice-Chair Meryl Redisch of Urban Forestry Commission, furnished the following response to *The Oregonian*.

---

As the current, and incoming, Chair of Portland's Urban Forestry Commission, we feel that the Oregonian's Editorial Board failed to see the forest for the trees in the recent editorial "Portland's Tree Policy is a Nuisance to Property Owners."

To be clear, the City did not require developer Greg Goodman to remove any of the public's street trees and pay a mitigation fee. As part of his development project Mr. Goodman made a business decision to remove healthy, large trees because they would not "match" those being planted on the other side of his building. Mr. Goodman clearly understood his decision would require a mitigation fee.

Maintaining a mature and healthy tree canopy is one of our City's key livability goals. Any Portlander who has a question about the rules governing street trees can consult with a Portland Parks and Recreation Tree Inspector. In this case, Mr. Goodman was first given the lowest cost options that would adhere to rules and protect the tree canopy. He could keep the existing trees, paying only to add new trees of his choice, or remove them, plant replacement trees and pay a fee.

The City Forester, Jenn Cairo, responded to Mr. Goodman to explain why preserving healthy large trees is desirable. She offered him yet another alternative: he could meet his desire for the trees to "match" by keeping the mature Norway maples and adding new "State Street" Maples which are so similar to the average passer-by that only Mother Nature would know the difference.

When there is difference of opinion about the City tree code, Portlanders have

the option to appeal to the Urban Forestry Commission, a volunteer board of Portland citizens who regularly review the application of the City's tree policies and plans. Instead of appealing to the Commission, Mr. Goodman elected to remove the trees and pay the fee.

The City's policies recognize that large, healthy trees, even if they are on the nuisance species list, are often more valuable than small ones. In fact, Norway maples are about 12% of Portland's street tree canopy, making them the predominant species. Big trees provide bigger public benefits such as managing storm water, reducing the urban heat island and increasing property values.

It takes small trees decades to grow into mature trees. It is tough to be a tree in the city. Pavement, sidewalks and the weight of buildings and cars are not friendly to trees. Rather than try to establish a new tree under harsh conditions, keeping an older, established tree is a wiser decision. In this instance, having multiple generations of trees would have been the best outcome for the long-term health of our tree canopy.

Portlanders love their trees, and expect the City to protect and promote them. Portland's tree code, the Urban Forestry program and the City's numerous urban forest partners and supporters pursue that goal with diligence and skill. Street trees belong to all of us. It just doesn't seem fair to have one developer's desire to match trees on aesthetic grounds cast a shadow on those who work so hard to protect one of our City's greatest natural resources.

*Joe Poracsky is Chair of the Portland State Geography Department and Chair of the Urban Forestry Commission. Meryl Redisch is Director of the Audubon Society of Portland and Vice-Chair of the Urban Forestry Commission.*

July 17, 2012