

From: Multnomah Tree Team Steward  
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Dear Tree Advocates,

You know how precious trees are and their contribution to both the environment and our health for all the people of Portland. Please take 20 - 30 minutes of your life to speak for the trees and help leave a legacy of a healthy tree canopy in Portland. **It is a critical time to speak up!**

I am writing this in hopes that you will use it as a guideline to write to our city leaders as well as pass it along to other people who care about trees. The City Auditor's office has recently made some noteworthy recommendations to the City Council regarding Urban Forestry and the Tree Code, so now is the perfect time for the City Leaders to hear from the concerned citizens of Portland such as yourself.

If you don't have the time to read the entire report, please look at the specific pages I have listed which include my editorial comments in green.

I do encourage you to read the full report though - While it is 28 pages, there are lots of large graphics and white spaces so it actually won't take that long.

**Also - There is a summary of the points I have emphasized at the bottom of this email in purple along with a list City Leaders who would benefit in hearing from you.**

Recommendations for an effective letter I am not giving a sample letter because it is more effective if it is in your own words - But it doesn't need to be long to be effective.

- Let them know who you are - parent, bus driver, construction worker etc. Knowing there is a broad base of support from all walks of life to save trees that help sustain everyone's quality of life is important for them to know.
- State the reasons why preserving the trees, increasing canopy etc. is important to you. Health of city air, legacy for your grandchildren, all the benefits trees provide or whatever stands out for you about why you think trees are important.
- State clearly what actions you would like to see implemented. If you don't have a lot of time you can say you support all the recommendations and then list a couple of explicit examples.
- Let them know you will be following their actions on this (I will send a follow up email regarding this)
- Be concise to address at least a few of the issues - your specific concerns. (Sorry this email is not concise but I have added summaries etc. for ease of reading if you are tight on time)
- Be sure to mention that development can happen and as well as preserving/saving more trees. Right now the city wants to focus on affordable

housing. Despite that fact, many affordable homes are being torn down, and replaced by very large expensive unaffordable houses. In the process, many trees are removed in order to accommodate the large footprint of the houses. Ask them to revisit if this process as it is not helping them meet their priorities.

· **In summary**, the most effective letters are courteous, to the point and include specific requests and explicit examples and let city leaders know you are following their decisions on this issue

Thank you

Emma - Portland Tree Steward.

The City Auditor's recent report for the Tree code entitled "Tree Code: Implementation phase shows progress and pitfalls". **Link to the report:** <https://www.portlandoregon.gov/auditservices/article/654512>

**Suggested readings if you don't have time to read the entire report:** Items in green are my editorial comments.

1. **Page 6** - A greater number of large species of trees are being removed than being replanted - The Auditor's office considers this undesirable - What is critical here is we are losing biomass of trees - that is large trees. Some of these are evergreens over 100 feet tall which are work horses in terms of reducing air pollution flood control etc. They are being cut down and being replaced with trees that may grow to only 30 or 40 feet maximum. In some areas of Portland many of the trees being removed are over 100 years old. So we have a significant net loss of biomass and thus lose all the benefits of those larger trees including their impact on air quality for the entire city from wind action which won't be replaced by the smaller trees **ever!** Urge City Leaders to remedy this by making it more difficult to cut down larger trees - such as much higher fees for removal based on the biomass value (all the benefits the trees provide), require a biomass equivalency replanting such as if a large tree is removed and smaller trees are planted, then multiple smaller trees must be replanted so the mature biomass will be equal. You may have additional ideas to share.
2. **Page 11** - Read the top two paragraphs - The Urban Forestry Program is understaffed and thus there is low compliance on replanting requirements - in some cases as low as 50%. Let the city leaders know you value trees and if the noncompliance of replanting continues we will have a significant canopy loss in the coming years. Urge them to fully fund the Urban Forestry Department.
3. **Page 11** - Bottom paragraphs includes the auditor's recommendation to update the permitting software to make it easier to track and hopefully enforce compliance. Key point: "the permitting system is set up for building development rather than requirements in the

Tree Code". Urge the city leaders to update the software - I think most people understand that updated software makes anyone job easier and more efficient. We need city efficiency.

4. **Bottom of page 12 and then page 13.** The City's goal for tree canopy coverage is 33%, which is measured every 5 years. It has increased slightly between 2010 and 2015 but still not reaching the goal. Urban Forestry managers said they may want to reconsider the methodology used to set the tree canopy goal and that the goal might be increased in an effort to give more weight to the benefits provided by trees, such as reduced energy consumption by home-owners, summer heat mitigation, improved storm water retention, and cleaner air. Considering the number of trees being removed in many Neighborhoods due to development, it is very likely the 2020 measurement will decrease. Besides development, the last several usually hot summer weather and less summer rainfall has stressed many trees and you can see examples of trees dying all over the city. This will also contribute to a net canopy loss. Encourage City Leaders to find more ways to protect the trees we do have.

5. **Page 14 - Equity Issues** - there are 4 key points listed here and you could recommend any or all of them to our City Leaders. We need city leaders that address the concerns/needs of all the citizens so please read these short key points.

6. **Pages 23, -27 - Response to the Audit.** All good to read but I especially think the Urban Forestry Management Plan had some important points (bottom of page 23 continued on 24) which I have retype below.

"We concur with the finding that there is a wide variety of opinions about whether the Tree Code does enough to protect trees. PP&R leadership and the Commissioner's office have been advocating for a comprehensive set of amendments to the Tree Code since early 2016. Urban Forestry staff have compiled a running list of Code issues with room for improvement, including issues flagged by other bureaus, the Urban Forestry Commission and the Tree Code Oversight Committee. Our staff worked with other Council offices and bureaus to propose an amendment package that would begin to address the most urgent issues, some of which are alluded to in the Audit Report."

#### **Summary of the above points to address in contacting City Leaders**

1. Ask them to remedy the issue of biomass loss due to large tree removals
2. Ask them to hire more staff for the Urban Forestry Department so there can be enforcement and compliance in tree replanting
3. Recommend the city update the permitting software for efficiency and effectiveness.
4. Support the need to come up with ways to meet and increase the city's canopy goal.
5. Ask them to address the equity issues findings in the report

6. Urge the City Leaders to support the Urban Forestry Managers Plan and adopt the amendment package of the Urban Forestry Commission

I have grouped the 14 email addresses here for your ease of cutting and pasting but specific departments are listed below if you are curious about the acronyms.

[cctestimony@portlandoregon.gov](mailto:cctestimony@portlandoregon.gov)  
[mayorwheeler@portlandoregon.gov](mailto:mayorwheeler@portlandoregon.gov);  
[Nick@portlandoregon.gov](mailto:Nick@portlandoregon.gov);  
[amanda@portlandoregon.gov](mailto:amanda@portlandoregon.gov)  
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[dan@portlandoregon.gov](mailto:dan@portlandoregon.gov)  
[psc@portlandoregon.gov](mailto:psc@portlandoregon.gov)  
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[IntermDirector.Esau@portlandoregon.gov](mailto:IntermDirector.Esau@portlandoregon.gov)

**Email addresses refer to**

The City Council: [cctestimony@portlandoregon.gov](mailto:cctestimony@portlandoregon.gov)

The City Auditor: [AuditorHullCaballero@portlandoregon.gov](mailto:AuditorHullCaballero@portlandoregon.gov)

The Urban Forestry Commission: [urbanforestrycommission@portlandoregon.gov](mailto:urbanforestrycommission@portlandoregon.gov)

The Planning & Sustainability Commission [psc@portlandoregon.gov](mailto:psc@portlandoregon.gov)

And key City Bureau directors: > >

Bureau of Planning and Sustainability (BPS): [susan.anderson@portlandoregon.gov](mailto:susan.anderson@portlandoregon.gov)

Portland Bureau of Transportation (PBOT): [leah.treat@portlandoregon.gov](mailto:leah.treat@portlandoregon.gov)

Bureau of Environmental Services (BES): [michael.jordan@portlandoregon.gov](mailto:michael.jordan@portlandoregon.gov)

Bureau of Development Services (BDS) [bds@portlandoregon.gov](mailto:bds@portlandoregon.gov)