

Why are there specific tree preservation requirements in the R-1 zone in Bridle Trails?

Trees contribute to Bellevue’s visual character and its ecosystem. As expressed by Bridle Trails residents, and recognized by policies in the city’s Comprehensive Plan, trees play a key role in the identifying character of this unique neighborhood. Residents expressed concern that the amount of tree cutting on existing and vacant single-family lots was having a negative effect on neighborhood character and quality. Although trees can be removed and replaced with new plantings, it takes years or decades for young trees to reach maturity and match the benefits of existing trees.

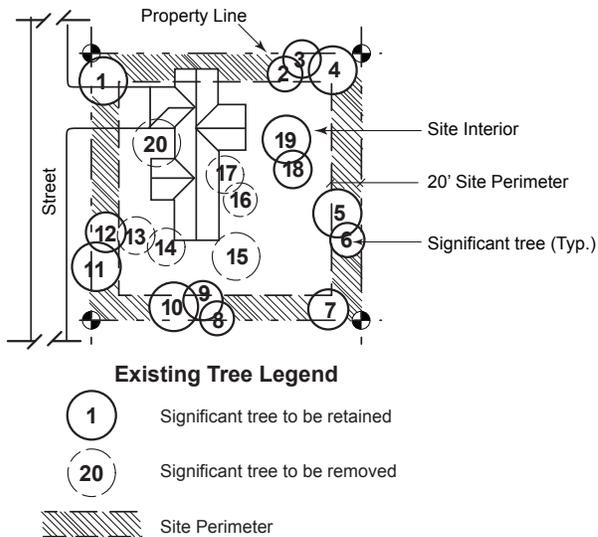
What trees must be preserved?

Perimeter Area. All significant trees within the first 20 feet adjacent to all property lines must be preserved. A “significant” tree is any healthy tree 8 inches or greater in diameter, measured 4 feet above existing grade. Areas devoted to access, utilities, trails, and similar needs are generally exempt from this requirement, but trees removed in these areas may need to be replaced.

Site Interior. In the remainder of the site, at least 25 percent of the total diameter inches of all significant trees must be preserved. This means that each significant tree in the site interior is measured, and the diameters are added together for a total. The combined diameters of the trees to be preserved must equal at least 25 percent of that total.

Will I be required to get a permit to remove trees on my property?

A clearing & grading permit will be required for the removal of any significant tree in the R-1 zoning district in Bridle Trails. A site plan must be prepared as part of your permit application. A site plan is a scaled drawing of what is existing and what is proposed on a lot. You must verify and accurately depict all locations and dimensions of property lines, type and size of significant trees to be removed, and type and size of significant trees to be retained. (figure 1)



Legend
 (figure 1)

Existing Tree Summary

Tree No	Species	Size	Retained
1	Douglas Fir	18" dia.	yes
2	Cedar	8" dia.	yes
3	Cedar	12" dia.	yes
4	Maple	16" dia.	yes
5	Alder	12" dia.	yes
6	Alder	8" dia.	yes
7	Douglas Fir	10" dia.	yes
8	Douglas Fir	8" dia.	yes
9	Douglas Fir	10" dia.	yes
10	Douglas Fir	14" dia.	yes
11	Maple	18" dia.	yes
12	Alder	10" dia.	yes
13	Alder	10" dia.	no
14	Alder	10" dia.	no
15	Douglas Fir	18" dia.	no
16	Alder	8" dia.	no
17	Alder	10" dia.	no
18	Douglas Fir	10" dia.	yes
19	Douglas Fir	18" dia.	yes
20	Maple	24" dia.	no

Existing Tree Summary
 (figure 2)

What if I only want to remove one or two trees? Will I still need to apply for a permit and inventory all my trees?

Although a clearing & grading permit will be required for the removal of any significant tree in the R-1 zone of Bridle Trails, you are allowed to remove up to 2 significant trees on a lot within a three-year period without meeting the perimeter and interior tree retention requirements. When only 8 trees remain, or 8 or fewer trees exist on the property, you are required to replace any of the last 8 significant trees with an equal number of trees somewhere on the lot. This requirement is in response to a desire to plan for the long-term retention of trees as part of the character of Bridle Trails and to avoid complete clear cutting of a lot over a period of time.

Can I preserve non-significant trees?

The Land Use Code (LUC) requirements are minimums. Additional tree preservation is at your option, whether or not those trees are significant. In some cases, preserving a group of non-significant trees and its understory vegetation can be approved as a contribution toward the significant tree preservation requirement.

What if my project is in the Critical Areas Overlay District?

Tree removal and clearing & grading of any type are not permitted in critical areas without a permit. Critical areas include steep slopes, streams, wetlands, and all of their associated primary setbacks. Trees that must be retained in these areas can be counted to satisfy the Bridle Trails tree preservation requirements.

Is there flexibility in these requirements?

In some situations there will be conflicts with locating or remodeling a house or gaining access to a lot and meeting proposed perimeter and interior tree retention requirements. For example, the minimum single side-yard requirement for structures in the R-1 zone is five feet, which is significantly less than the 20-foot perimeter tree retention requirement. The Alternative Tree Retention Option (ATRO) will allow flexibility to develop a site as permitted under the dimensional requirements of the R-1 land use district while still meeting the intent of tree retention provisions. Under this alternative option the applicant must demonstrate that an equal number of significant trees are retained elsewhere, or that site development retains other natural vegetation and provides supplemental planting to promote the natural vegetated character of the site.

What if I remove trees without a permit?

The Bellevue City Code allows penalties for illegally clearing trees on private property. In conjunction with restoration requirements, monetary penalties can work as a disincentive for violating tree retention requirements. Penalties for each significant tree cleared, cut, damaged, or removed would be the greater of two hundred dollars or the replacement value as determined under the methods described in the *Guide for Establishing Value of Trees and Other Plants*, published by the International Society of Arboriculture.

Where can I get additional information?

- Handout L-8, Tree Removal
- Handout L-21, Critical Areas
- Handout L-27, Tree Preservation
- LUC 20.20.900, Tree Retention

This document is intended to provide guidance in applying certain Land Use Code regulations and is for informational use only. It cannot be used as a substitute for the Land Use Code or for other city codes, such as the Construction Codes. Additional information is available from Development Services at Bellevue City Hall, or on the city web site at www.bellevuewa.gov.

For land use regulations that may apply to your project, contact the Land Use Information Desk in Development Services at Bellevue City Hall. Phone: 425-452-4188. E-mail: LandUseReview@bellevuewa.gov.