



Oak Lodge Community Council

Your Clackamas County-recognized Community Planning Organization (CPO) • www.oaklodgecpo.org

Dear County Commissioners

The OLCC recently reviewed a land use application for partitioning a property at 1230 SE River Forest Rd. in Oak Grove. Unhappily, we again saw the infamous tree "loophole" in action.

Our Land Use Committee, on visiting the site, saw that, *prior to any permit*, the owner had cut a number of rare, mature white oak trees and a large redwood in preparation for an application for partition. By cutting prior to filing for a permit, the owner *avoided any oversight* by the planning department. They made the statutes in our ZDOs that are meant to protect the tree canopy completely useless.

This is not an isolated case. Developers know of the "loophole" and use it routinely, and as a consequence, Clackamas County has a very damaged tree canopy, as well as a damaged reputation for its commitment to sustainability. Metro recently published a *State of the Watersheds Report* that calculated the canopy cover for Clackamas County inside the UGB. Our coverage of 23.9% was among the lowest in the Metro area.

No one can be proud of this number. It documents the failure of policies and regulations that are meant to protect our environment as spelled out in the Clackamas County Comprehensive Plan, the Complete Communities recommendations, and Statewide Planning Goal #5. It indicates that we are failing to move forward on the County's Sustainability Goals.

In speaking with neighbors of this site, we saw their frustration and anger about the loss of trees in their neighborhood. We also learned that there are other property owners in that same neighborhood who are likely to take advantage of the "loophole" and cut down even more of the rare white oaks, as well as redwoods and Douglas firs, and otherwise damage our urban forest ecosystem, with the County looking on with no recourse available.

The Board must act quickly to implement effective policies and ordinances, such as the proposed Tree Conservation Ordinance, to protect and enhance our urban tree canopy, the urban ecosystem, and the quality of life.

The members of the Oak Lodge Community Council stand for the protection, maintenance and enhancement of our area's natural resources and urge your participation and support towards this goal.