

Urban Tree Canopy

Trees and tree canopy provide cultural, historic, and ecosystem services and are a significant part of life in the Pacific Northwest. Urban and community forests have many functions and values including providing aesthetic, cultural, and historical values, conserving energy, reducing air and water pollution and soil erosion, improving air quality, carbon sequestration, moderating temperature impacts from climate change, mitigating stormwater impacts, reducing noise and light pollution, supporting salmon populations, and many more ecological and social benefits. The Urban Tree Canopy subelement plays an important role within the Natural Environment Element, establishing policies that seek to preserve and enhance Snohomish County’s climate and environment for all.

Planning for urban unincorporated tree canopy preservation, restoration, and management is consistent with GMA goal 10:

Protect and enhance the environment and enhance the state’s high quality of life, including air and water quality, and the availability of water.

Protecting, restoring, and managing Snohomish County’s urban forests also is an important part of implementing the 2024 Comprehensive Plan’s Vision Statement. One of the Vision Statement’s guiding principles reads:

Natural Environment: The County values its beautiful landscapes and fiercely protects the natural environment for its ecosystem services, recreational opportunities, and habitat. There are many connected greenways, open spaces, and wildlife corridors throughout the county providing habitat, flood mitigation, and tree canopy. Regional and neighborhood parks, trails, and open spaces offer recreational opportunities that are accessible and inclusive to all.

The Urban Tree Canopy subelement draws significant inspiration from chapter 76.15 RCW, the Washington State Urban Forest Management Act of 2021. This Act modernized the 2008 Evergreen Communities Act (ECA), in chapter 76.15 RCW and its related programs. The ECA established the need for tools including canopy assessment and regional tree canopy analysis, and targeted technical assistance to support cities and counties seeking to deliver impactful urban forestry programs. The Evergreen Communities Program found in the ECA includes standards to provide for the conservation and long-term maintenance of the urban tree canopy. The Urban and Community Forestry Act (2021) adds capacity to the ECA by:

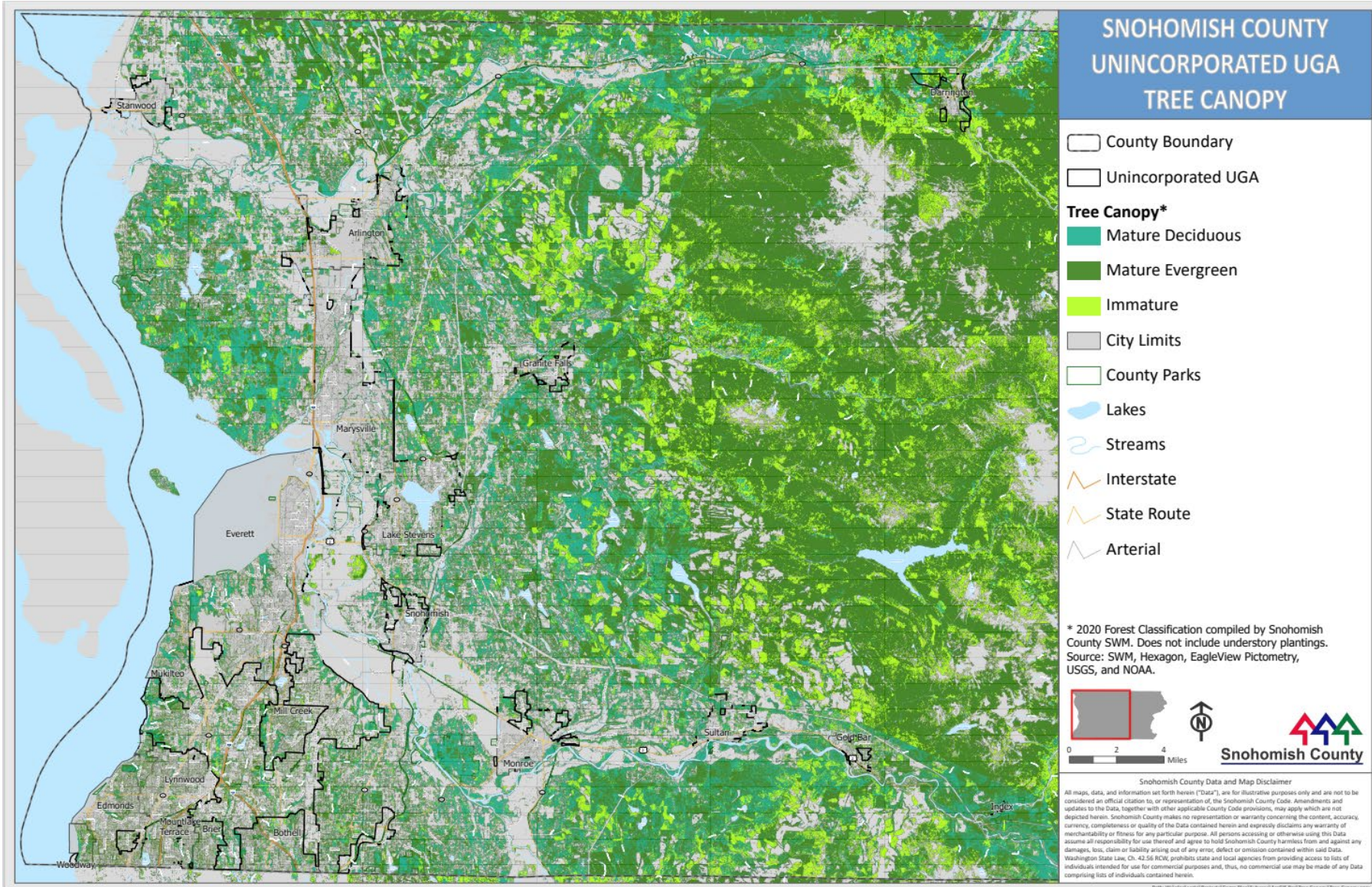
- Utilizing information and analysis around environmental health disparities and salmon recovery plans;
- Increasing capacity for the delivery of an urban forestry program in order to strengthen and enhance its impact; and
- Expanding participation to include federally recognized tribes and community-based organizations.

The following goal, objectives, and policies address the challenge of how to balance the need to plan for growth and development, while maintaining livability and a holistic approach for sustainable, equitable, and resilient, and healthy tree canopy in urban areas. The Urban Tree Canopy subelement supports the Natural Environment and Climate Change Elements and will guide Snohomish County in

creating an Urban Forest Management Program and taking steps to be recognized an Evergreen Community.

DRAFT

Map 1. Snohomish County Unincorporated Urban Growth Area Tree Canopy



Map 2. Snohomish County Southwest Unincorporated Urban Growth Area Tree Canopy

