



# CANNON BEACH COMMUNITY BULLETIN

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## Trees in Our Era

**By Mayor Sam Steidel**

Question is, does a property owner have a right to cut trees on their property? In order to build or a view or for any reason they wish? Didn't every lot in town become a house by cutting a tree down?

Does not the community also have a right to maintain a tree canopy?

Yes, most houses built in CB at some time did cut trees. Had to, place was saturated by 'em. It is pretty easy to say the tribes a long time ago would have seen a vastly more complete canopy. Hundred years ago, fifty, even ten years ago, each era has both a connection to a canopy we do not have today. Both in quantity and in loss. That said each era had reason to complain about loss of trees from the prior era as well as one

which we could say is much better than we have today.

Thing is, today we are finally realizing how dramatic the loss has become because we can see an end point. But before I delve into that, a definition.

The term canopy refers to a cover, in this topic's sense, the cover of the older stock of grandad trees.

It is on us as caretakers of our environment to acknowledge that we have not well filled in with the follow on generations of the natural stock. Namely spruce, hemlock and cedar. We planted, in our attempt to be responsible; shore pine, decorative cherry and here and other pretty esteem-building anomalies. I confess I chose a beech, not wholly a native. I have since mended my ways and planted two hemlocks and a fir. (afraid the elk took the fir recently)

Our, the city's, plan for replacement could have been better designed to rebuild the canopy in the last fifty years if the program specified species. Bygones. Time now is to quit the blame pointing of past generations and whining about what could-have-beens and dive into a solution for today. In both replacement and preservation.

We can not replace the canopy that was. Not quickly. We can see our mistakes and move toward corrections. Yes in the past cutting

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was allowed, even promoted. To that point, so was filling in wetlands, then called swamps. So was shoving out sand for the ocean to take it away, or hauling sand here and about. So was scarfing up round 'beach' rock. Or moulding the intertidal estuaries with concrete and boulders digging drainages and shoring up hillsides.

All things frowned upon today because we see them as finite, dangerous tactics or important landscapes. In the topic of the grandad trees, finite threatens the city scape. Yes many are aging to an extent they are dangerous. What with the cultural climate of insurance and liability, dangerous is also an ever lowering bar.

The few remaining groves of canopy and the spartan stalwarts that fortune provided locations between house footprints have become the thin green line of survivors. Trees are a renewable resource, only if we remember to renew. Forget to pay your cable bill and no soap operas for you, forget to plant trees and no trees for generations. We neglected to pay, or perhaps we tried to pay on credit with ornamentals and shore pines. Just think, if every shore pine planted from the fifties on was a tall and healthy hemlock. Or my beech was a fifty year old cedar. Dang.

My point is, if you haven't got it yet, trees matter to the community.



Aesthetic character, climate endurance, native environment, historical and cultural honor, so many good reasons to be mindful for keeping what we have left.

Is that fair to the new house builder? Probably not. Neither is no infill of wetlands or fire codes to the hundred year old cottage. Be no downtown with out fill. Thing is if a new arrival chooses this community for it's character and culture it is on them to adopt an understanding not bring the baggage of standard-practices.

But the value of their property? Was and is created by the value of the community. Cannon Beach has this very unique quality that holds higher property value greatly because of how the community so cherishes character and environment.

Pose this question in forty years time from now:

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How might property values be made if the character is altered too harshly? No tall trees in the built up areas. No wetlands. Every lot built to the max with cookie cut boxes. Parking on every spare patch of land. Dunes molded and partitioned. Every other house rents for \$1200 a night in 2060 dollars. Is value so entirely reliant on proximity to the beach?

Perhaps I exaggerate. Try and imagine, go back to 1960. What would a resident of that era who was concerned about their community then say if they saw what it was like now? Would today be a shock? Perhaps as much of a disbelief as when we see old photos of back then, but, in the opposite?

Time to own up. We did wrong with good intent rules. Time to do what we can to make good. Trees mean more today. Time to make rules work inline with who we are.

